

Cookies

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Cookies

by [TigerPrawn](#)

Summary

AU in which Will was sperm donor for Margot and Alana, and has joint custody of their daughter Abigail. Abigail is adorable, the mommy's think daddy needs to get laid, Will is as sassy and grumpy as you'd expect.

From the below HannigramPrompt prompt on tumblr -

Notes



Cookies

A03: TigerPrawn



I just need some easy going fluff and I have an idea of where to take this. So I'm just going to post here and there short chapters as and when I have the time and inspiration. It will eventually be completed, but at the moment it is a soap opera, so come on the journey with me <3

Prompt:

The fourth door that opens and closes in their faces leaves Will colder than the autumn chill ever could.

“C'mon Abby, just one more door.”

Abigail's shoulders were slumped, her feet shuffling as she pulled her wagon away from the seventh house in a row where they wouldn't even let her recite the practiced speech she had worked on for nearly a week.

Will knew he shouldn't have gone to the ritziest neighborhood in Baltimore for this but the prospect of Frederick Chilton and his bratty daughter Freddie's cookie selling record continuing for the third year running wasn't something he wanted to listen to Abigail cry about again.

This next house would be like all the others he was sure, but it wouldn't hurt to try.

Abby knocked and Will stood behind her, readying himself for the door to close just as fast as it opened.

The moment the door opened and the man on the other side of it smiled, Will knew this time would be different.

Chapter 1

“Well! What have we here?” The ridiculously attractive man gave a broad smile and spoke with a smooth European accent that made Will forget how to speak for a moment.

Get it together Graham!

“Cookies!” Abigail supplied cheerily whilst Will was still trying to remember English. “If I sell enough I get a prize!” She then launched into her little prepared speech which she added at the end, thoughtfully “... but the money goes to a charity, which is better than getting a prize so I don’t mind if I don’t sell the most. I just want to sell lots for the charity. You can buy some if you like.” She beamed that fantastic smile of hers at the man, who was still smiling warmly and looking at Abby intently - taking in everything she said.

“I see.” He seemed amused and there was a pause as he looked at Will for a moment.

Will knew he was likely taking in their clothes, Will’s tatty old coat, it was clear this wasn’t their neighbourhood - it was a risky tactic for more sales. “We, uh... we thought you and your neighbours might be in need of cookies...” Will tried to make light.

“Oh yeah, this was daddy’s idea! He said that the people in these houses are all loaded and would buy all my cookies if they had any sense, but not to get my hopes up because sometimes people had more money than sense.” She was still beaming her smile as she betrayed Will. He could feel the heat rising in his face. He winced and looked down, rubbing a hand over his face in the hopes of hiding the ridiculous blush.

“Did he now?” There was at least some amusement in that tone, but Will couldn’t look up at the man’s face. “And what does your mother say about this idea?”

“Oh! Both my mommy’s think daddy is super smart, that’s why they asked him to make me, despite his many other flaws.” He didn’t need to look to know the proud smile she was wearing as she repeated Margot’s words practically verbatim. Margot and Alana told her all the time how great Will was, and he returned the sentiment - they were an unconventional family, but a supportive one.

Another silence and Will chanced a look up, expecting to see the sort of looks he often received when people knew about Abigail, her two moms and Will the donor dad - confusion or disgust, sometimes both. Instead the man was looking at Abby with something close to adoration.

“I think maybe you get your smartness from him then.” The man replied and looked at Will, which caused Will to flush red again and clear his throat.

“Uh, yeah. She’s a smart cookie. Probably from her mom though. I’m mostly just a socially awkward idiot trying not to say the wrong thing.” He tried to give a chuckle but sort of coughed instead. *Smooth, Graham. Why are you even talking?*

“Well, I will buy your cookies.” The man agreed.

“Oh!” Abby clapped her hands together in delight and grabbed a box from her little cart to hand him. Will smiled.

“I mean to say I will buy all of them.” The man grinned, turning the grin on Will with a glint in his eye that made Will both nervous and flustered. “But, only if your father will come on a date with me, do you think he would do that?” He was smiling back to Abigail.

She screwed up her face and gave an exaggerated shrug. “I dunno. Daddy doesn’t really date. My mommy’s are always telling him he should go dating. I heard my mommy’s say he needs to get a lay, I think it is a type of date?” As Abigail spoke he turned every shade of red and even stifled a groan, especially when he clocked the amused grin on the handsome stranger’s face. Then Abigail was tugging his hand. “Will you go on a date daddy, so I can sell my cookies?”

He was hard pushed to deny Abby anything, but wasn’t too keen on what this situation was teaching his daughter, or the stranger’s delight in it. “I don’t know hunny. Do you think it’s right to blackmail people into buying things?” He crouched down next to Abby and lowered his voice to a mock conspiratorial whisper - “I’m not sure this guy is on the up and up.” They both looked up at the man. Abigail giving him a scrutinising glare.

“I assure you, my intentions are honourable!” The man held up his hands and spoke sincerely through his amused smile.

“I don’t know... This seems like a bad example to set for a child. Don’t you think Abby?” Will’s face wasn’t quite as heated now that he felt the tables had turned, and he smirked at the man, feeling like he was playing him at some devious game. It was actually the most entertaining conversation he’d had with an adult in a long time.

"Daddy," Abigail turned to him with a serious look. "I think the important thing here is the charity. If you want me to make money for the charity you would go on the date."

Will was amused but gave a shocked gasp. "Betrayed, by my own flesh and blood."

"Charity is important," the foreigner commented. "That is a good lesson to teach a child." The warm smile aimed directly at him almost made Will melt. Perhaps the mommy’s were right, perhaps it had been too long since he last got laid if this was the effect someone could have on him. A handsome, witty, seemingly charming someone who was being sweet to Abby, but... all the same.

“Fine!” Will held up his hands in surrender as he stood up, but then looked down at Abigail with a serious expression. “I will go on a date with a complete stranger - who we know resorts to blackmail and who could be a serial killer for all we know, just so you can sell your cookies.”

“Yay!” Abby clapped her hands together again and started to pile boxes out of her cart and onto the ground.

“Will Graham.” He held out his hand and it was taken, the man had a firm but gentle grip and shook it whilst looking very intently into Will’s eyes, warm smile still in place.

“Hannibal Lecter.” He replied before breaking the handshake to fish money from his wallet and pass it to Abigail.

“Hann... what kind of a name is Hannibal?” Will realised the words were out of his mouth before he could take them back. And then he felt a punch in his thigh, looking down Abigail was giving him a stern glare.

“You’re so rude daddy! This is why you don’t have dates!” She stomped off in annoyance down the footpath with her empty cart in tow. Will scrubbed his hand over the back of his neck.

“Um, yeah, sorry... I don’t have many social graces... I have none in fact.” Will winced.

The man just continued to smile as though this morning had been the most fun of his entire week. Abby had that effect on people, Will mused proudly.

“It’s quite alright, I did put you on the spot. Of course, I won’t hold you to going on a date.”

“Oh, no... no, that’s um...” Will stumbled over the words and then let out a puff of breath. Polite he was variable on, sassy was where his stock lay and if that wasn’t ok with this guy they might as well call it quits right now. He cleared his throat and replied flirtatiously.

“Well... you said your intentions are honourable, so how can I say no?”

A grin then that seemed a little dirty now that Abigail was waiting at the gate and unable to see. Hannibal handed him a business card. “Well, call me when you are free, weekends are best for me.” Will went to take the card but it was held firm and Hannibal’s fingers strayed across and stroked Will’s before letting it go. “And Will, I should admit now, perhaps not all of my intentions are honourable.”

Will gulped.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

The mommy's make Will call Hannibal because they are just as good at blackmail as Hannibal is!

"Daddy has a date!"

"What?"

It was Alana that had opened the front door but Margot's voice that had responded from somewhere within the house. Alana gave Will a grin as he stepped inside and handed her Abby's bag.

"We went to sell the rest of the cookies this afternoon and a rich old man asked daddy for a date." Abby announced proudly.

"He blackmailed me." Will corrected.

"Ok, this I need to hear." Margot was suddenly in the hallway too and the four of them were jammed together, all grins but Will.

"I don't even know if I'm gonna call him."

"You're calling him." Both Margot and Alana said in unison and then grinned at each other.

Will huffed and pushed passed the ladies and into the kitchen, going straight for a mug and the coffee pot.

"Staying for dinner?" Alana asked, still grinning.

"No, I better head home, gotta walk the dogs." He swigged back half the mug.

"And make a phone call!" Margot teased. Abigail followed her into the kitchen, now divested of her coat.

"So... how handsome is he?" Alana asked, pouring herself a cup of coffee and then hiding her grin behind the mug when Will shot her a pissed look.

"Daddy thought he was very handsome." Abigail supplied happily as she hopped onto a kitchen stool and Margot placed a cup of chocolate milk in front of her.

"I did not." Will lied, his cheeks burning.

“He blushed!” Abigail retorted, displeased at being called a liar. “Mommy you said that daddy blushes when he likes someone?”

Margot nodded with a smile, cup of coffee now in hand. “Oh, you mean like he is now?” her smile widened to a grin.

“Fine! He was handsome. What do you want from me?” Will knocked back the rest of the coffee.

“Call him!” Alana said at the same time Margot mouthed at him *get laid*.

He rolled his eyes. “We’ll see.” He put his mug in the dishwasher, kissed Alana’s cheek, Margot’s cheek and Abigail’s forehead before heading out the door.

“He blushed a LOT!” Abigail muttered into her chocolate. The mommy’s shared a look and a laugh.

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“Daddy, do you want to bring your date to my birthday party? That would be a nice date.” Abigail asked as soon as Will picked up the phone, before even saying hello.

“Hunny, shouldn’t you be in bed?” Will looked at the clock, he’d not long got back from walking the dogs. A longer walk than usual as his mind may have wandered and lost track of time.

“Mommy said I could call. She said he might like to come to my party.”

Will bit back the curse on his tongue. Just like Margot for sure! “I don’t think so Abby, that’s a kids party and it’s this weekend, he might want to do something... grown up instead.” He knew if either of the mommy’s were listening in on the other line they’d snigger but he had no other way to phrase it. They must not have been because Abby turned from the phone and he could hear her relaying his response - *Daddy says the man wants grown up time*. He heard both women laugh, and clenched his jaw.

“Tell daddy he better bring this guy to the party so we know for sure he went on the date. If he wants grown up time before then he’d better call him. Now!” Margot called out.

“Tell Mommy-” Will stopped himself, “tell her and Mama goodnight. And get to bed. We’ll talk about your party another day.”

When they hung up he fished the business card from his pocket, fingering along the edge of it. It was Sunday night, it wasn’t late, but maybe too late to call? It was certainly too early to call, he’d only met the man a few hours ago and didn’t want to seem too eager. But... Now Margot had put this damn idea into Abby’s head and he was not interested in her spending her birthday sulking. The party was Saturday afternoon... maybe they could have a Friday night date? He shook the thought from his head but dialled the number anyway.

On the third ring he was about to hang up but then it was picked up.

“Hello?”

“Oh, hi... Hannibal... This is Will, Will Graham.”

“Hello Will, I’m surprised to hear from you so soon.” The voice sounded pleasantly surprised, but all the same Will cursed in his head and blushed.

“Yeah... I may have, uh, I have these women in my life - harpies really - but they’re raising my child so I kind of have to do what they say.”

“I see.” An amused chuckle. “And what do they say?”

“They told Abby you might come to her birthday party... as a way to blackmail me into calling you. You guys would all get along well - blackmail being a mutual hobby and all.”

“Hmm. They sound delightful.”

“Harpies, as I said.” Will felt his chest swell at the ease of the conversation. It was nice. A sort of nice he hadn’t had in a long time

“When is your daughter’s party?”

“Saturday afternoon... But it, uh, I didn’t think it would make for a proper first date.” Will felt a little embarrassed.

“First date? You’re considering more beyond that required in our deal?”

“Abby’s deal? I had no part in it other than to be sold into human slavery by my own daughter.” Will chuckled.

“Ah yes, I remember. It was a harrowing time. At least she got a good price for you.”

“Some would say you got the raw end of the deal really.” Will chuckled.

“Cookies and a date? I definitely got the better deal.” Hannibal practically crooned.

Will chuckled again, glad the man couldn’t see his red face. “I was worried you might want to do something a little less cake and jelly for our first date.”

“Oh no, you’re totally correct. Are you free Wednesday?”

Will’s breath caught and his mouth went dry. “Um... yes?”

“I have tickets to a gallery opening, it’s not something I can get out of, an obligation really. Would you care to join me? It would certainly improve my evening.”

“Oh, uh... I’m more a fly fishing and burgers kinda guy... I wouldn’t want to cramp your style.” Will winced. It wasn’t his idea of a good time, but the thought of not being able to take a chance to see the man after this nice and easy conversation - and his looks didn’t hurt. Nor did the sexy accent. *Get a grip Will!*

“If you wouldn’t be comfortable-”

“No, no. It sounds great, actually. It sounds fine. If you give me the address and the time I can meet you there.” Hannibal relayed the details.

“Well, I better let you get on with your evening... It was nice, uh, this was nice.” Will winced at sounding so corny.

“Yes. I’m glad Abby sold you to me.” Another light chuckle that warmed Will.

“I guess she was just lucky you like cookies so much.” Will laughed.

“Will, can I tell you a secret? I can’t stand cookies.”

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Will and Hannibal go on their first date, it goes about as well as anything does for Will Graham.

Will had managed to mostly ignore the upcoming date for the whole of Monday. Tuesday had been a little shaky, and in his last class on Wednesday afternoon he didn't realise he was talking about the wrong slide until some of the class started to giggle. He ended up dismissing them early but setting an assignment due Monday - never passing up the opportunity to remind them he wasn't a soft touch. He packed his bag - twice, realising that the first time he had forgotten a folder of notes - and then drove home.

He'd been trying so hard not to think about the date that he hadn't really thought about what he might wear. His work clothes might not be formal enough judging by how fancy Hannibal was. He recalled the man at his luxurious house, answering the door in a beautifully tailored three-piece suit that hugged him in all the right places. His heart fluttered a little at the thought. Between the visual and the all too easy phone call, Will really hoped he didn't screw this up. A gallery opening sounded like a formal affair. Maybe he should have looked into hiring a dinner suit or something? He cursed himself, frustrated, pulling pretty much everything he owned out of his wardrobe and throwing it on the bed.

He just stared at the pile as though something would magical jump up for selection, which after ten minutes he decided was definitely not going to happen. He found a black pair of pants that he was sure had a matching jacket at some point, and set it to one side. It took half an hour of rummaging on the bed and looking all through his room before finding that it was shoved to the back of the wardrobe and smelt stale. Maybe if he wore it and took it off as soon as he arrived? They must have a coat check or somewhere he could leave it.

He opened the window and hung the jacket in front of it, hoping at least a short airing might help, had a quick shower before pulling on the trousers and looking for a shirt. That was even more difficult than finding smart pants and jacket. He pulled on one, and a tie before realising he just looked like a teacher and sighed, pulling it back off.

"How do I own this much plaid." He sighed with frustration as he started throwing non-candidates in the vague direction of the wardrobe. It left him with two shirts - one white with pale pink pin stripe which he didn't remember ever buying, and the crisp and startlingly white shirt he had worn only once - to Margot and Alana's wedding. Would white be too plain? What tie would he wear with the pink striped shirt? If he was taking off the jacket but wearing a tie, should he wear a vest?

He picked up his phone, considering calling the mommies for their advice, only knowing that they would be completely insufferable, and the clock on his phone told him he had less than 20 minutes to get ready before he really needed to leave to make it on time. He cursed and grabbed the pink stripe shirt and pulled it on before managing to find a black tie amongst some truly horrid ones he'd been given as gifts over the years. Mostly from Abby - or more likely her mothers. The only black vest he had seemed slightly informal but hopefully would pass without notice, he grabbed that from the bed and pulled it on, grabbing the jacket as he headed for the door.

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By the time Will got to the gallery he was more than a little flustered. He had made it in good time, but then had been unable to find parking anywhere near the damn place. In the end he'd had to practically hike 5 blocks back and knew his hair had dried at a funny angle and walking the breezy streets was not helping out one bit.

Will was not someone usually bothered in the least by his appearance. It was the butt of most jokes where the mommies were concerned, and he cursed himself for feeling so conscious of it now. But when you were going on a date with a man the looked and dressed like doctor Hannibal Lecter, you had to at least try and not show them up. That particular intention was immediately scuppered on his arrival when he got to the gallery and was asked for his name at the door, only to find it was not on the list.

"It's a private exhibition sir, I'm sorry, you'll have to come back during regular hours." The attendant told him in a patronising tone.

"No, I'm.... I'm meeting someone here. Hannibal Lecter? I'm sure he's on your list." Will knew his tone was snarky and that was only going to get people's backs up as it usually did. But he was slightly panicked. Did he have the wrong place? Was he meant to have brought an invite, or should Hannibal have put his name on the door?

"Doctor Lecter?" The young woman questioned, giving him an incredulous look.

He glared at her, an eyebrow tweaked - wanting to say *did I stutter* - but going with the marginally more polite "I believe that's what I just said."

"Will!"

He turned and saw Hannibal at the top of the few steps into the gallery. "Apologies, I had been waiting but I got dragged away. Is everything ok Sylvie?" Hannibal turned the most amazing smile on the girl and it made Will's heart thud just the once before settling back into rhythm. It was one of those layered, diplomatic things - to the girl the smile was accommodating and polite, but Will could clearly see that it masked snark and annoyance. Just enough of that spilled through for Sylvie to squirm and redden a little as she shook her head. Will was a big fan of snarky undercurrents.

"No, of course not." She turned a wide and forced smile on Will. "Have a lovely evening sir."

They started up the steps. Hannibal smiled across at him, his eyes moving quickly over Will and taking him all in, a slight smile at his mussed hair. "Your style isn't as I imagined from our brief encounter, now that I have the pleasure of seeing you without your hat and gloves."

Will smiled. "Well, it's cold going door to door." He said lamely, feeling self-conscious and more than a little nervous as he tried to pat down his unruly curls. It had been easy talking with the man on the phone, but in person was another matter and a whole different situation for Will. Reaching for something to say, he tried to focus on what the doctor was wearing. He'd not really noted it before as it seemed so similar to how he'd been dressed on his doorstep - but Will realised it was a lot less formal. Smart plaid trousers and shirt, no tie. From first impressions he'd anticipated something dressier, not that he didn't look great - rolled up sleeves showing off forearms that made Will lose train of thought for a moment.

When they got to the top of the steps Will's heart sank. The room was large and white, dotted with makeshift walls made from white screens - art hanging here and there in some intentionally random order. Almost everyone was in jeans, some with shirts, but either way this was not a formal occasion and Will felt immediately conscious - for the first time in his entire life - of being overdressed.

"I thought... I thought it would be formal." Will felt colour rising in his cheeks.

Hannibal's face fell as he seemed to realise the error he'd made. "Oh. Will, I must apologise for the oversight. It hadn't occurred to me to... You seemed so casual so..."

"No, it's fine." Will forced a reassuring smile even as he wished the ground would swallow him up. "Um, is there a coat check? I'll just leave my jacket..."

"Of course, please." Hannibal helped him ease the jacket off and then kept it in hand. "If you'll wait a moment I'll go check it for you." Hannibal looked as awkward and worried as Will felt. So far this was not off to the best start. Urgh, it was going to be horrible having to explain to the mommies, and worse - to Abby - that he wouldn't be bringing a date to the party after all.

He cleared his throat as Hannibal started off. "I'm, uh, just going to use the bathroom." Hannibal turned- a nod and a smile before he continued to the coat check.

Will could see the sign for the bathroom in the back corner and had to make his way through the crowd of people to get to it. The fact that none of them seemed to pay him much mind didn't lessen his embarrassment or the rise of heat in his cheeks.

He headed to the sink and looked in the mirror as he turned the faucet, loosening his tie with a rough tug before exhaling. He splashed some water on his face, hoping to cool the blush, then running damp hands into his hair to try and fix it.

"I'm sorry, I hope you don't feel uncomfortable." Hannibal's voice surprised him and he looked up to see the man had just entered the bathroom. "For what it's worth I think you look..." Hannibal seemed to be searching for the word, which made Will feel pretty terrible.

"Ridiculous?" Will offered.

Hannibal smiled. “No. I was going to say exquisite, but worried that you might find the word too-”

“Florid?” Will gave an amused huff.

“No.” Hannibal chuckled. “I worried it might seem too forward.”

Will joined in with a light laugh. “I feel that we bypassed forward when you bought me from my daughter. Seems like a fairly forward way to get a date. Do you pick up many random people on your doorstep? I know of course that it wasn’t in fact the cookies that cinched the deal so I have to assume it’s a reasonably common occurrence.”

“I admit that you are the first to turn my head. Enough for me to purchase at least.” Hannibal’s smile was warm. “But, I mean it Will, I am sorry. Perhaps...” Hannibal appeared to drift into thought.

“Perhaps?” Will prompted.

“I wonder if you would permit me?” Hannibal gestured towards Will’s tie - he assumed he was going to tighten and straighten the knot, so he gave a nod.

“Clothes and I do not get on well together.”

“Fight regularly?”

“Every day. I’m actually not a particularly formal person. I feel there is a sort of pained irony on how long it took me to get looking this smart when I’m often mistaken for a tramp.”

Will tried to ignore the feel of Hannibal’s hands as they played around his collar, so close to the flesh of his neck, now covered in goosebumps.

“I don’t believe that for one moment.” a sly smile.

Will was about to reply to contrary, complete with several examples of it having happened, when he felt a tug and realised that Hannibal was actually undoing his tie.

“What are you-” his words dried as Hannibal pulled one end and the tie started to slide around his collar, making his hairs stand up on end.

“I want to put you at ease Will.” Hannibal’s voice was smooth. He looked up with a mischievous grin as the tie slid all the way off.

“Honourable intentions, need I remind you?” Will chuckled, even as he felt heat rise in his face again as he moved into a different kind of discomfort. He wondered - hoped - the doctor would lean in for a kiss. He licked his lips without even making the conscious decision to do so. *Get a grip! You don’t even know this guy, even if he has the most amazing cheekbones...*

Hannibal folded the tie over and over until it formed a neat little package, which he then placed on the counter by the sink. Hannibal’s eyes watched his own hands intently as he then undid the top two buttons of Will’s shirt.

Will's breath hitched as the hands then undid the buttons of his vest, letting it fall open. He could only watch - dry mouthed - as Hannibal picked up the tie and stuffed it into one of the vest pockets. He arranged it so that it peaked out, almost like a pocket square. Will could barely breathe by the time Hannibal stepped back and looked him over.

"A more suitable look for the evening perhaps? You would like quite well next to the hipster crowd, as Sylvie calls them. He stepped forward again and turned Will to face the mirror with hands on his arms, burning through his shirt. He frowned at the reflection for a moment before moving and starting to roll up Will's shirt sleeves to the elbow.

"That's better. I would never normally mess with perfection, but in the interest of your feeling more comfortable, perhaps this helps?" Hannibal's breath was practically on his neck.

Will just nodded and attempted to smile. He looked at his reflection and felt an immense gratitude towards Hannibal. Despite the smart pants he looked much more casual - that sort of effortless casual that had obviously taken work, but that seemed to be appropriate from the crowd he'd seen so far.

"Thanks." It was little more than a mumble, as Will tried to get his pulse back under control.

"Think nothing of it." Hannibal smiled. "Shall we?" He indicated the exit and gestured for Will to follow.

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Will's comfort level throughout the evening had yo-yo'd so much that he was pretty on edge within an hour and a half. Things had continued well after the bathroom excursion - Hannibal had brought them drinks and they had strolled the gallery talking, not even glancing at the art. He learned that Hannibal was a psychiatrist, which made him wince, at which the doctor at least laughed and promised not to psychoanalyse him. He'd told Hannibal about his job at Quantico and this had opened up a whole line of interesting conversation. The doctor's eyes had shone, no doubt relieved that Will had at least one interesting aspect. In fact, on more than one occasion the doctor had placed his hand lightly on Will's arm, or brushed their fingers together. There were a couple of lingering looks too, which Will was sure he was not misreading. During those moments he was sure of a goodnight kiss.

But most of the evening had been less comfortable. Hannibal had explained he was involved in some sort of committee with the gallery and so had to attend these functions, and was glad to at least have Will as a distraction on this occasion. It also meant that pretty much everyone there knew him and at some point came over to make small talk. That was definitely not Will's strong point. In fact these encounters ranged from him being ignored through to being ogled and leered at in a sort of knowing way. Each time, he rarely spoke, not really having much to say about art in general. As uncomfortable as it was at times, he couldn't help but feel ever more warmth for Hannibal. The man was courteous in a way Will had never mastered, jovially brushed off the several impertinent comments about whether they were in fact on a date, and several times when he could tell Will was clearly not comfortable, he laid a gentle hand on his arm or found some other small way to reassure him. Ground him.

By 9.30 Will was ready to go. He was enjoying Hannibal's company but he had definitely understated his ability to manage such functions. He didn't want Hannibal feel like he needed to leave too, or that he hadn't enjoyed their time together, but he had definitely reached his limit.

"Hannibal, I, uh... I have an early class. Do you mind if I slip away?" He rubbed his hand over the back of his neck, feeling colour rise as Hannibal turned a warm and open smile on him.

"Certainly, I completely understand. It is a school night after all. I should be leaving myself. Perhaps... I can walk you back to your car?" Hannibal's smile was hopeful.

Will's mouth went dry and he could feel the prickle of heat up his neck at the suggestion - his imagination racing onto that goodnight kiss. "Oh, um... sure. I guess, sure." He clenched his jaw. The doctor had this ability to make him tongue tied despite their earlier ease of conversation, and Will wasn't quite sure how he felt about that yet.

Hannibal smiled, a sort of comforting smile as though he understood that Will hadn't intended his words to be rude or a brush off despite how non-committal they were.

"Wonderful, I'll grab our jackets and be back in a moment."

In Hannibal's absence Will turned and looked at the first piece of art he had bothered to look at the whole evening. It was a monstrosity and he realised immediately he had pulled a face at it. He hoped no one had noticed, but really, it was so awful. It was in the style of the old masters but, presumably, poorly painted with the figure holding a burger king meal. He moved along to read the information panel next to it. A whole essay it seemed, basically boiling down to - corporate America is bad, with a side of, go organic. He rolled his eyes so hard he thought he might lose consciousness. This sort of pretentious shit was exactly what he hated about modern art.

"A powerful piece, no?" A high, musical voice next to him belonged to a man in a flowing white kaftan over loose jeans and a pair of flip flops. Will studied him for a moment, trying to work out if he was being sarcastic, but he appeared to be deadly serious.

"Powerful is one way to describe it." Will agreed cautiously.

"Of all the pieces, I think this one brings the message home hardest." The man spoke in earnest now, eyes still intently surveying the painting.

Will frowned at the painting. He just couldn't see anything more than a trite ham fisted message being forced down the viewer's throat, wrapped in poor artistic talent that would choke most. Before he realised it, he said- "I don't know, pretty sure my six year old kid could have done a better job. She probably be less blatant at the least."

"My word! How dare you!" The man's voice pitched higher.

"Is there a problem?" Hannibal asked, reappearing at Will's side with their coats.

“Problem? Is this person a friend of yours?” The man sneered and eyed Will up and down, continuing before either of them could answer- “he suggested his child would have created better art-”

Hannibal’s face broke into a small smile which seemed to hide a bigger one behind it. “Now Philip, I am sure that people have said much worse things about your art. I know I certainly have.” He turned from the man and passed Will his coat. “Ready?”

Will took his coat and nodded, unsure whether to smile or apologise. He opted for shrugging into his coat as he walked to the exit with downcast eyes.

*

“I’m guessing that was the artist then?” Will asked as they walked along the street.

“Artist is a very loose term in this case, but yes.” Hannibal laughed lightly. “I was opposed to his inclusion in the exhibition, but it appears that sometimes it is a case of who-you-know, and I was out voted. I agree that Abby would likely create something much more subtle and artistic, and I have no gauge of her artistic talent as yet.”

“Oh, she draws a mean stick figure!” Will confirmed.

“Should I propose her work for the next exhibition?” Hannibal smiled. “Perhaps you could show me some samples on Saturday?”

“About that, really, you don’t have to come. I mean, it’s a kid’s party. It’ll just be full of obnoxious brats, half of which Abby doesn’t even like but the mommies apparently *have* to invite - school yard politics.” Will looked at him with a half smile. “I mean, it wouldn’t be anywhere near as exciting as this evening.”

“A relief then, this evening was all too thrilling for my tastes. When Mrs Robertson had a third glass of wine I was close to fainting I will admit.”

Will chuckled. “Was she the one with the parrot print dress? Or the one who asked if I was your *young man*?”

“Neither, she was the one eyeing you so lecherously all evening that I made sure to steer us completely clear of her. Not that I can blame her in the least.”

“Oh, I don’t mind a bit of leching here and there.” Will grinned.

Hannibal returned the grin. “Noted... Even so, she has a reputation as a pincher, and I wouldn’t want you to be sore on your drive home.”

“Oh yes, very considerate of you then.” Will smiled as they walked in the vague direction of his car, not caring how long it might take to get there. “I, uh... I’m sorry if I embarrassed you. I did try to warn you about my lack of social graces.”

“Not at all, any embarrassment is mine. I’m sorry to have put you in that position. It was not an ideal first date, but I can’t say I’m sorry you came - it would have been almost unbearable

without you there. And Your interpretation of Philip's *art* was delightful."

"It is a powerful piece, I'm told."

"Did it rouse any particular emotion for you?"

"It made me kinda hungry if I'm honest. Hungry and angry, but mostly hungry."

"Strong emotions indeed. Perhaps Philip isn't the lost cause I had thought."

"Perhaps he is." Will corrected and laughed. Hannibal joined in, a rich and deep sound that made Will want to link arms with the man, but he held himself back. His car was on the next street and he found himself wondering - imagining - the goodbye kiss. He swallowed.

"What time should I come over on Saturday?" Hannibal asked, breaking the minute of silence.

"2pm. Oh, it's at the mommies house. Shall I give you the address, or I could pick you up and we could drive over together?"

"Car sharing sounds fine. You know where I live of course." Hannibal smiled.

Will returned the smile and then his face dropped. "No, wait. Shit. I have to get over there early. I promised Margot I'd be there by midday to help set up the tables and decorate, things like that. Maybe I can come out and get you then go back?"

"I don't mind attending earlier, if you are in need of extra help?"

"You don't need to do that. It's already not going to be much of a date..."

They reached Will's car and he started fishing out his keys.

"You forget, your daughter graciously agreed to sell you to me, so I feel it is the least I can do for her."

Will laughed. "Ok, but if we ever have our own kids can you not tell them their daddy's met through a cookie trade." His blood was suddenly ice cold in his veins as he realised what he said. A prickling sensation raced over his skin as tiny pinpricks of sweat rose. "I mean... uh... I didn't..."

"Will please." Hannibal chuckled, placing a comforting hand on Will's arm. "I absolutely promise never to tell our as yet imaginary future children the truth of our meeting, I fear Abigail may not feel as inclined to secrecy." The words were warm and teasing, but even so Will felt a little nauseous, and was still waiting for the blood to return to his face which was now practically numb.

"Yes." He forced a laugh. "She's a stinker." the laugh died in his throat and he unlocked the door. "I gotta, uh, I need to..."

Hannibal seemed to be hiding a smirk as he watched Will, flustered and pale, get into the car. “See you Saturday. Let me know if you’d like me to discuss this deception you plan for our children with Abigail, or will you speak with her on the matter instead?”

Will clenched his hands tight on the steering wheel. At least his face was no longer cool, heat now rising instead, darkening his cheeks and all the way up to the tips of his ears. “I have to uh... Good night, Hannibal. Thanks for uh...” he couldn’t find any words.

The doctor smiled and closed the door for him. “Goodnight Will, I look forward to Saturday.”

Will just nodded and started the engine, staring determinedly ahead as he pulled away, too busy feeling mortified to realise he hadn’t tried for that goodnight kiss.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Can a second date go smoothly even if it is at a children's birthday party?

Will didn't sleep much Wednesday night. Every time he closed his eyes, in fact pretty much the whole evening, he replayed that mortifying conversation where he had mentioned them having kids in the future. *Smooth, Graham, as always.* As first dates went, it was up there with some of his worst, of which there were many.

He tossed and turned most of the night, anxiety dreams creeping in. When he woke on Thursday, one day closer to Abby's party, he made a decision. For a long time he'd been happy on his own, kind of. He'd been pretty much single since well before Abby was born and never considered he was missing out on something. He had a family in Abby and her moms, that was enough. And on the occasions that it wasn't he knew a couple of bars that were good for picking up a one night stand. Not that he even did that often, certainly not as often as Margot thought he should from her teasing.

He wasn't about to start introducing complications like Hannibal Lecter into his life. Did he really need someone in his life that made him feel so flustered. Did he need someone in his life at all? He had a good thing going, he was happy not being dragged into awkward social situations and embarrassing himself. A date where he had dressed wrong; been redressed; been the subject of gossip; insulted an artist to their face; and then embarrassed himself to the point that he wanted the ground to open and swallow him whole - made clear that he shouldn't be in the dating game.

He'd made up his mind. Most definitely. He got ready for work and poured himself a coffee as he agonised over phrasing before finally sending Hannibal a text -

- Thanks for last night. You seem like a great guy, but I don't think this is going to work out. At least you're released from the kid's party now :) Hope you have a good weekend. Will.

Hopefully firm and friendly but not flip? He pocketed the phone, a relief from the anxiety and hassle of dating scuppered only by the ache in his chest. *One date, with a guy who is way out of your league and will bring you nothing but future embarrassment as you continually make an ass of yourself in front of him. Get a grip!*

Will drove to work and didn't check his phone again until his first class was over.

-Apologies Will, I believe my phone may be broken. I appear to have received a blank text from you. What time should I expect you on Saturday?

Will's chest constricted for a moment before he let out a breath he didn't realise he'd been holding. He frantically scrolled back through his phone until he found the message. It had definitely sent fine. He forwarded it on to Hannibal again, unsure what else to do. It seemed whatever he did was going to make this awkward. *Story of my life!*

- I've forwarded it to you again. Re: Saturday.

- Very considerate of you, but I'm afraid that it has also come through blank. Should I be ready for midday or earlier?

Will felt a flush rise, his palms were getting sweaty. This was getting more awkward by the moment.

-Sorry for the change of plans, but don't worry about Saturday, I'll call you later.

He hated the thought of having to do the brave thing and end this dating over the phone. Ending it via text should have been quick and easy. Like ripping off a bandaid, this was like having a tooth removed.

-Another blank message Will. I'll be ready for midday unless I hear different.

-I can't pick you up. The date is off, I'm sorry.

-You seem like a nice guy but this isn't going to work out. Sorry again.

-Apologies Will but both those were also blank. Perhaps we can discuss on Saturday when you pick me up?

Will almost threw his phone across the empty classroom. But instead took a deep breath. What the hell was wrong with this man's phone? Why did this have to be so hard. It felt like the only option left really was to go over on Saturday as planned, at least face to face might be easier than calling this off over the phone, then he'd still have time to help with the setup before the party started.

-Midday will be fine.

-Wonderful, I shall be ready. Perhaps you might wait until after the party to decide whether this will work out or not? ;)

Will glared at his phone, his mouth a little slack. This guy was some piece of work.

-Hannibal, did you receive all my messages just fine?

-Yes Will, I did.

-I really don't know what to say to that.

-How about "I'll see you Saturday."

-I'll see you Saturday.

*

“Oh my god. Are you serious?” Margot’s laugh was so high that he had to move the phone away from his ear. “Honestly, I cannot wait to meet this guy!”

Will rolled his eyes. “Don’t get your hopes up, I’m still considering just calling it all off.”

“Will. Please, don’t be an idiot. From everything you have told me so far this guy sounds perfect for you. You’re both the same weird brand of asshole. He is your sasshole soulmate!”

Will groaned. “Please. Margot! Do not, under any circumstances, use that *pet name* in front of him tomorrow. Or anytime really. In fact never say it again. Actually... maybe just don’t talk at all, that okay?” He wasn’t sure she heard anything he said as she was still having fits of giggles on the end of the line.

“Anyway...” She took a breath and calmed herself, though the occasional giggle burst through like a hiccup. “You need to bring that painting table from your garage, we need it in the games room for drinks and snacks.”

“Is that why you called?” He asked with mock incredulity. “Because I thought it was just you snooping on how my date went. I’m shocked Alana isn’t on the line with you!” he knew full well it was likely Alana was on the other line, probably on mute otherwise he’d no doubt hear her laughter too.

A gasp of equally mocked indignation “Would we?!”

“Good night Margot. Kiss Abby for me...” He sighed then added. “Night Alana.”

He heard the unmute click and Alana’s voice, brimming with amusement replied - “See you tomorrow Will.”

*

Will had spent way too long Saturday morning dragging the table he used for DIY, out of the garage and cleaning it off. He would never hear the end of it if a nice tablecloth got ruined. By the time he got it in the car it was pretty much time to leave and collect his date. He decided, as difficult as it might be, not to reflect on the fact that he was taking a date to his daughter’s seventh birthday party. Somewhere in the back of his mind were countless jokes the mommies were arming themselves with - the winner so far being that it could be a hallmark movie. His retort would be *more like a horror movie!* Which Hannibal would no doubt hear and that would pretty much kill the whole thing dead.

And Wednesday night, even Thursday, he wouldn’t have minded that. He didn’t want to really be rude or upset anyone, but it would have been one way to get rid of an unwanted suitor. But truth was, he wasn’t unwanted. And that was giving Will a headache.

He pushed the thoughts down and concentrated on the road until he realised he had barely blinked most of the journey. *Get a grip, Will!* It was probably the last thing he should have scolded himself with because then he imagined getting a grip - taking hold of Hannibal’s shirt

and pulling him into a kiss, before releasing the grip to move his hand further down to grip something else.

Heat flushed up Will's face and a car horn honked behind him. The red lights he had stopped at were now green.

He was a few minutes late when he pulled up at Hannibal's house. He was already waiting at the door, which he closed and locked before heading down the path with a large gift bag - should he have told him not to bring a gift? It looked big, maybe something expensive. The guy clearly had money but even so... He watched as Hannibal got into the car, bag on his lap, eyes drawn to the house behind. Will had forgotten quite how grand the place was, and immediately resolved not to dwell on that either - which of course didn't stop him putting his foot immediately in his mouth the moment Hannibal got in the car.

"Nice pile! You must make some good money." He winced as the words came out but was slightly more mortified when Hannibal replied -

"I'm comfortable, though the house is mostly inheritance from my parent's estate."

Holy fuck Will, what is wrong with you? He blanched and his mouth went dry. He wanted to apologise. He wanted the ground to swallow him up. He wanted to say *sorry Hannibal, I tried to warn you about me, jump on out and we'll pretend this whole week never happened.* Instead he said - "Shit!" and white knuckled the steering wheel.

He was surprised when Hannibal let out a light chuckle. "Will, I want to say that I wish you weren't so nervous around me, but if I'm honest, I find it quite endearing."

Will didn't dare look over at Hannibal, not with his face practically on fire. Instead he cleared his throat, made an awkward sort of nod and then started the car, driving in silence.

*

When they got to Margot and Alana's house, Will pulled onto their drive and muttered that he had to get the table from the back. As he closed his door he took in a deep breath and let out a long sigh. Why did anyone do this to themselves?

When Hannibal's door opened, he moved to the back and started to unload the table. Hannibal appeared with his gift bag in hand but placed it down and offered to help. Will just shook his head and awkwardly pulled the table from the car before shuffling it along to the side gate. He rang the bell there and waited.

Margot had to have been waiting the other side as the gate immediately opened to reveal her standing, nonchalant, against the wall - glass of wine in hand and a grin on her face.

"Hello handsome." She grinned at Will.

Will sighed and shook his head. "Really Margot?"

"What?" She grinned. "I was talking to your date!" She winked at him and then pushed past to greet Hannibal with a warm handshake. "Margot Verger, charmed I'm sure. I hope the

drive over wasn't too terrible, Will has an awful habit of letting his foot live in his mouth."

Will groaned and shook his head, not daring to look back. Instead he got the table through the gate and was about to continue when he heard Hannibal reply - "Incredible fortune for both of us I should imagine, that I find such a habit rather enchanting."

There was a pause, perhaps Margot hadn't expected the reply but Will could hear the smile in her voice when she replied - "Enchanting? And with that accent. Will I think you might have hooked yourself some kind of European royalty." There was a pause again and Will didn't need to look back to know Margot was assessing Hannibal, looking him up and down and sipping her wine. "Yes, yes I like you. You can stay." She told Hannibal before loudly proclaiming as she marched up to Will and took the table from him "He's a keeper Will, don't fuck it up."

Will groaned again but let Margot take the table and continue. He held the sidegate for Hannibal, who had an extraordinarily pleased smile on his face as he passed.

*

Will introduced Hannibal to Margot and Alana properly in the kitchen. They seemed, for the moment, to be on their best behaviour. Alana wasn't likely to tease him in front of Hannibal and as long as she was in earshot Margot would likely rein it in.

Hannibal had placed his gift on the kitchen table and both mommies were making a fuss over the fact that he had brought something. They called Abby down from her room where she had been getting ready with her friend Freddie who was staying over. Both girls greeted Hannibal with a courtesy. Margot stifled a laugh and Will shot her a look, knowing she had likely primed them to be overly polite for her own amusement. Hannibal, for his part, didn't seem to find it odd to have children act so formally, and kissed their hands one at a time before wishing Abby a happy birthday.

The gift turned out to be batch of brightly coloured, homemade cotton candy, and a machine for Abby to make her own. She was of course delighted and the mommies seemed pretty impressed.

Will was so pleased to see everyone getting along that he smiled and said - "Well, if she ends up with a massive sugar high you get to keep her."

To which Abby frowned and replied - "If he keeps me daddy then we can all live together, because I already sold you to him so he would get us both." she grinned like she had solved a difficult question in her math homework.

"Yes, darling." Margot started - "That's exactly how it works!"

Will was too mortified by the whole thing to look at Hannibal, opting to look at his feet instead as he muttered something about setting up the tables, and disappeared from the room.

*

An hour and a half later Will was beyond frustrated with himself. He hadn't even seen or spoken to Hannibal as he had set up tables and unloaded drinks from the fridge, moved things from here to there and back again. He felt terrible about it, and rude. But the longer it went on the harder he found it to seek the man out and before he knew it people were arriving.

Alana and Margot brought the food to the tables and both gave him a pointed look which he was not going to comment on. Instead he took a breath and returned to the kitchen. He wondered if Hannibal had spent the whole time just sitting there awkwardly waiting for him. But when he got there he found instead that he had the cotton candy machine set up and was showing two very sticky looking little girls how to operate it.

Hannibal looked up at Will and smiled as he entered the room.

"I hope you don't object? Alana said this would be a good way to keep the children entertained until the party started."

"Of course, no, that's fine." Will smiled but still felt a little awkward. He turned to the girls "Abby, you take Freddie and go get cleaned up now, your guests are arriving."

The girls happily jumped down from their chairs and scampered off.

"Looks like fun." Will smiled, feeling no less shit for having just left them to it.

"We've been having a lovely time. Care to try some?" Hannibal smiled warmly and held out a bowl brimming with multicoloured cotton candy.

Will took a piece with a grin. "You know, until we had Abby I don't think I'd had cotton candy since I was a kid. Such a childhood thing I guess." Will mused as he popped the piece in his mouth and felt it melt and remould on his tongue. "Pretty good!" He cleared his throat. "Look, I'm sorry about ditching you, it wasn't intentional. I just get a little... overwhelmed. I don't date much - I tried to warn you."

Hannibal's smile slipped into a lopsided grin. "Honestly Will, it's fine. I completely understand. Besides Abby took the time to kindly explain to me that you are an inept caterpillar."

"A what?" Will wasn't sure whether he had just been insulted and if so by who.

"She explained it is the opposite of a social butterfly. You are yet to emerge from your crystal bliss, apparently." Hannibal was grinning. "I believe that this might have been something her mother's told her."

"Well..." Will huffed, a little too amused by Abby to be annoyed. "As it happens I am perfectly comfortable in my crystal bliss."

Hannibal chuckled. It warmed Will and he felt at ease again. How easily he worked himself up and how crazy easily Hannibal could calm him back down. He didn't even want to try and think about that. Not least because Hannibal was then gazing at his lips and he felt his heart thud in his chest.

“Will you... you have a little candy... may I?” Hannibal smiled.

Will nodded and resisted the self-conscious urge to reach up and rub the cotton candy off his lip, or run his tongue out to find the offending morsel - preferring instead to have Hannibal wipe it away. Only Hannibal didn't wipe it away - he stepped closer, napkin in hand but then leaned in and gently took Will's top lip, cotton candy and all, with his mouth.

Will was pretty thrown by the whole thing, on automatic pilot as Hannibal's mouth went from nip-licking his top lip to sliding against his. Will tasted the sweetness of the cotton candy on Hannibal's tongue as it moved against his own. He stifled the moan that rose in his throat, and held himself back from pressing his entire body against Hannibal's. It had been a while, but even so he was sure he wouldn't have reacted quite as strongly to anyone else.

“Oh. Sorry.” Alana's voice brought him crashing back to reality and suddenly Hannibal was gone and he felt bereft. He opened his eyes to find Hannibal smiling at him as though he were struggling not to laugh. Will on the other hand, was once more, deeply mortified.

*

Alana had come to ask Will to help with moving one of the tables over a little, whilst Margot was greeting guests. He wondered how much of it was actually to keep him out of the way - a lot of the other parents found him weird and awkward. Of course, Margot always reassured him that it was due to the fact that he was weird and awkward.

He'd been reluctant to leave Hannibal on his own again, mostly because he felt like he had fallen over the edge of a precipice and hadn't hit the ground yet. He presumed hitting the ground might be if they got to finish that kiss. He could still feel the press of Hannibal's lips against his own but decided it was best to put it as far out of mind as he could whilst there was still a children's party going on. As it happened, Abby and Freddie came back from the bathroom and volunteered to keep Hannibal company. They looked only marginally less sticky than before their washup - there was a small piece of cotton candy in Freddie's hair that Abby had clearly been too polite or devious to mention - he was never really sure when it came to those two. From the strangely devilish smile he saw Abby shoot Hannibal, he presumed it was the latter, and was just glad they were getting along.

As Will followed Alana he heard Hannibal tell Freddie to hold still whilst he got the cotton candy out of her hair, which earned a huff and then a delighted giggle from Abigail. Strange kid. He shook his head and smiled.

It was over an hour before he found Hannibal again. After moving the table to better use the space, he had been roped into greeting parents after all - reminded of his fatherly duties. He was about to make the same old playful joke about having filled the donor cup best he could, when more parents arrived and a look from Alana silenced him, though not Margot's grunt-laugh.

Still in the kitchen, Hannibal, it turned out, had been deserted by Abby in favour of friends her own age and was cleaning up the cotton candy maker.

“Hannibal, you don’t need to do that!” Will moved quickly to him and took the bowl from his hands.

“Nonsense, I made the mess after all. If we leave it, it will become encrusted and harder to clean later.” Hannibal smiled, and Will was sure he saw his eyes flick down to his lips. The memory of the kiss came right on back and he wasn’t sure it planned to leave again any time soon.

“I, uh... ok, I...” he handed the bowl back and let Hannibal get on with the clean up, not missing the smirk on his face. Will wasn’t sure how he felt about how much Hannibal seemed to enjoy watching him squirm. He wondered what it would take to make Hannibal squirm, and the image of the kiss flashed back into his mind. *Damnit Will!* He scrubbed a hand roughly over his face and took the big bowl of cotton candy out to the table.

When he came back Alana and Hannibal were chatting easily, which was great he guessed - trying not to get ahead of himself. It was already kind of weird that their second date was sort of his equivalent of meeting the parents. But then he had met Abby right off the bat, so it was already unconventional.

Will’s thoughts were broken when he realised what Alana was saying -

“Oh, no, no... I mean... It’s not like he’s undateable.” She let out an uncomfortable laugh and Will knew something had happened - she’d said something she hadn’t mean to. She was starting to look a little flushed. *Oh god, what did she say?!*

“Say Alana, how about you go ruin someone else’s date?” Will forced out an obviously fake laugh and Alana covered her face with a hand.

Hannibal was attempting to contain a smile when he turned to Will. “Must she? I am finding these little snippets of your life rather interesting.”

Will was about to ask what she had said but Alana started talking again.

“I’m sorry Will, I just mentioned it had been a while. I mean, really the last date I can honestly remember you going on was with me and that was a decade ago.”

“Alana, please!” Will held up his hand.

“You dated?” Hannibal asked, he seemed no end of amused as he looked between the pair of them.

Will groaned and Alana bit her bottom lip. “I kind of assumed you told him.” She muttered quietly.

“It’s our second date Alana, when do you think we might have discussed our entire dating history?”

“You have a dating history?” Margot joined with deep sarcasm as she entered the room and picked up a bowl of chips from the counter.

“I was hoping to get one until you two stuck your noses in!” Will huffed back at them, ignoring Margot’s wink and grin as she exited once more with the chips.

“I should... go help with that.” Alana said, following Margot out.

Will sighed and slumped against the counter.

Hannibal was grinning at him as he dried his hands. “You and Alana dated? That seems-”

“Complicated?” Will sighed. The family arrangement they had was quite simple, and yet others often found it complicated.

“I was going to say intriguing. I assume it didn’t work out, or is there something I should be made aware of?” Hannibal’s grin didn’t waver.

“What? No! We’re friends, just friends.” Will’s words came out in a rush but when he saw Hannibal’s smile go from cheeky to warm, he smiled himself and relaxed. “We went on three dates, the last one was to a friend’s party. Alana and my friend got on better than we had been and that’s the end of that.”

“The friend was Margot?” Hannibal ventured.

“Yup. You’d think considering I got them together and had a baby with them they would treat me better!” Will’s mutter was half mock indignation and half sore loser. Hannibal laughed.

*

They had been dragged into the festivities soon after. A few of the parents had hung around and Hannibal made easy conversation with them, they even seemed a little more friendly to Will - the doctor clearly did things for his social standing.

They then suffered through a man making balloon animals, before finally presents and cake.

“I’m sorry, this likely isn’t really your idea of a good time.” Will leaned in to whisper to Hannibal as the kids started to make a mess with the cake.

“It’s fine Will.” He smiled. “I enjoy spending time with you.”

Will’s heart made a resounding thud and his face went a little red. He wondered if he should reply that he felt the same, but the words stuck in his throat even though that was the case.

“Will?” He hadn’t even realised that Alana had moved next to him. “Can you go grab the party bags from the study, they’re in the box on the desk.”

“Um, sure... yeah.” Will nodded and then gave Hannibal a small smile. “Back shortly.”

Hannibal nodded.

It wasn’t until Will got into the study and the door closed behind him that he realised Hannibal had followed him. Will started a little as the door clicked shut.

“Sorry Will, I didn’t mean to startle you. I came to offer my assistance.” There was something mischievous behind the man’s smile.

“I got it, it’s fine.” Will nodded to the box on the desk, moving to pick it up. But then Hannibal’s hand was on his arm and turning him.

“I didn’t mean with the box.” A wolfish grin spread across Hannibal’s face.

“No?” Will gulped and returned the smile, his heart starting to race.

“I noticed that you still had some candy on your lip. Maybe you should go to the bathroom to clean up?” Hannibal’s tone gave away that he had no intention of letting Will resolve this situation alone.

“You mean, go back out through all those people with this mess on my face? They already think I’m weird.” Despite the truth in it, his words were playful.

“There might be one solution, if you’d permit me?” Hannibal cocked an eyebrow.

“By all means doctor, you are the doctor, doctor.” Will grinned but still took in a sharp breath as Hannibal snaked a hand up around his neck and moved in close to him.

Hannibal leaned in so that his lips were ghosting over Will’s when he said. “This shouldn’t hurt a bit, but do let me know if you feel anything.”

They were both grinning as Hannibal gently repeated his earlier action of drawing Will’s top lip into his mouth. Will felt a little giddy, there was a sort of buzzing in his feet and his legs felt weak. He was pretty sure that he wanted to spend quite a lot of his upcoming free time making out on a couch with Hannibal Lecter.

The doctor pulled back after a moment with a frown. “Hmm, there doesn’t seem to be any there after all.”

Will almost stumbled forward, chasing the lips that had left his, and taking a moment to register what Hannibal had said. The glint in Hannibal’s eye gave him away easily. “Oh, maybe it was the bottom lip, have you checked there?”

“An oversight. I do apologise.” Hannibal grinned again and this time went for Will’s bottom lip. Moments later, Will was moving his arms up around Hannibal’s neck and deepening the kiss. It was slow and soft. One of Hannibal’s hands had moved to the middle of his back, the other moving up from his neck to play in his hair. The sensation made Will’s eyes practically roll in his head. His legs gave way a little but he was saved by the desk, and he took the opportunity to lean into it for support.

Hannibal’s body followed his until the doctor was pressing him against the desk. Will’s mind raced ahead - imagining what it would be like to sit back on the desk, legs spread to allow Hannibal to press further against him. Will groaned. That must have spurred Hannibal on, because the man pressed Will further back as though he might even lay him out on the desk.

The sound of the box being knocked off the desk made them both jump apart. Will's heart was racing and glad to see that they had only upset the party bags and it hadn't been a child walking in on them or something. Yes, a child's party was the worst ever idea for a date. Will let out a relieved laugh, which Hannibal joined as he rested his forehead against Will's shoulder.

"I'm sorry Will, I don't know what came over me."

Will winced and bit down on his lower lip so as not to reply that if Hannibal played his cards right...

The door opened and Margot glided in, a lopsided grin on her face though she looked at neither of them as she located the box, put back in the few bags that had spilled out and then walked back out of the room.

"Well, that could have been awkward." Will laughed.

*

They rejoined the party, which was now winding down, and the mommies both told them to get going, that they didn't have to stay and help with the cleanup - both ignored this and by the time everything was set right and the table was once more in the back of Will's car it was well into the evening.

Will tucked Abby into bed before grabbing his jacket, running into Margot and Hannibal by the side gate. Margot gave Hannibal a stern look before she kissed Will's cheek and returned to the house. Very curious.

"I better get you home." Will smiled. It was late and he wasn't sure where Hannibal stood on second date sleepovers but he was starting to really like Hannibal and didn't want to do anything to fuck things up.

The drive was over too quickly, conversation and laughter flowing between them in an easy way Will wasn't sure he'd ever really had with anyone before. He didn't hide his defeated sigh as he pulled the car up in front of Hannibal's house. They sat in silence for a moment before Hannibal said -

"I get the sense that I shouldn't ask you in for a nightcap."

Will took in a breath and let it out slowly. "Do you mind? I had a great time, but as you may have heard, I don't really date. I'm not good at this, so maybe we can see how things go? Take it slow?" Will wanted to snatch every word back as he said it. He knew he was doing the right thing even if it meant fighting the urge to cover himself in cotton candy and have Hannibal eat it off of him.

Hannibal smiled and took hold of Will's hand. "I want you to be comfortable Will. Whatever works for you."

Will wanted to melt but instead cleared his throat and gave a curt nod. Hannibal leaned in and kissed Will's cheek before getting out of the car.

He was about to close the door when Will started - "Wait. What did Margot say to you as we were leaving?" she'd looked really stern and Will wanted them all to get along.

Hannibal grinned and leaned back in the car. "She said that if I hurt you she'd gut me like a fish. I think I believe her." Hannibal continued to grin as he shut the door leaving Will to make a mental note to have words with Margot.

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Third times a charm? Will's next date with Hannibal doesn't go as expected. Or at all really...

Will woke up thinking about the kiss in the study. Remembering the way Hannibal pressed against him had his hand wandering down to his crotch to deal with his morning wood situation. One persistent thought in his mind after he came over his hand - *why the fuck didn't I go home with him?*

He knew why of course. He liked the guy, this wasn't a one night stand, this might actually go somewhere. He didn't want to get physical until he knew exactly where. He knew from experience how hard it was if things didn't work out after that point. His thoughts were interrupted by his phone buzzing. He groaned in annoyance and wiped his hand in his boxers before picking up his cell and answering it.

"Good morning Will."

"Hannibal! Hi." He was surprised to hear from the man but pretty glad about it. There was something soothing and warm in his voice that Will wished he could bottle. A salve to the shitty memories his mind had wanted to rehash.

"I'm sorry for the early call, it... I was just thinking about you."

"What a coincidence, I was thinking about you too." The words drawled out with a rarely voiced Louisiana inflection. He immediately stilled and smacked himself in the head. *You are just too fucking smooth, Graham!*

Hannibal chuckled at the end of the line. "All good I hope?"

Will paused. There was definitely a note in the man's voice, a flirtatious, knowing note that Will was sure meant that Hannibal had a pretty good idea of exactly how he had been thinking of him and what he might have been doing at that time. He made the split decision to roll with it -

"Very good." Will chuckled back.

And then Hannibal hummed. A pleased sound that threw Will completely. It wasn't so much *I enjoy the thought of you thinking about me whilst jacking off* and more *I'm glad I could bring your pleasure*. Before Will could speak, Hannibal followed up with -

“I’d like to see you again, if I may? I know you had wanted to cancel last night, but perhaps I have earned another chance?” Hannibal’s voice was soft and a little meek, he seemed genuinely worried that Will might say no.

Will smiled easily and then huffed out a laugh when he replied - “of course! You’re so good at getting rid of errant cotton candy.”

Hannibal returned the laugh. “Ah yes, it would of course be one of my least valuable skills that you like the most. Did I tell you I can cook? perform all kinds of emergency surgery?” The words were crooned but there was no boasting there, only gentle teasing.

“At the same time? Impressive!” Will settled back into the bed, melting into the pillows. Hannibal was just too easy to connect with. Easy in a way no one else had ever been, not even Molly. Strangely, it comforted more than scared him - at least on the phone. In person was always harder. And despite that he was eager to see the man.

“Maybe I can cook dinner for you sometime this week? Cooking only, no surgery, I wouldn’t want the extra company.”

Will’s heart fluttered - it would be the first time they’d really be alone for a date. “Yes, that would be - shit, fuck.”

“Will?”

“Damn, I mean. No, sorry I can’t this week. There are exams at the end of the week, I said I’d extend my office hours to help some of the students out.” Will huffed and clenched his jaw, immediately grouchy. “If they don’t know this shit by now they’re not going to pass anyway.” He grumbled.

Hannibal chuckled. “I really admire your selfless attentiveness to your students Will.”

“Ha!”

There was a comfortable silence for a moment before Hannibal ventured - “I’m afraid the weekend is out, I have a prior engagement. But perhaps soon after? Would... would it be forward to admit that I’d like to see you again rather soon Will?”

Will cleared his throat and felt heat rise in his face. “No, uh... I mean, me too. I guess? I mean... I would really like to see you again soon.” *Why did I say no to going back to his place last night?!*

“You guess? I’m hurt.” The teasing tone was back and it made Will’s chest swell.

“Urgh, I was trying to sound casual. You know, not too eager. But as usual I miss the mark. Is... is it too forward if I tell you I might regret going home last night?” Will’s face was on fire as the words fell out of his mouth.

“I... No, not too forward at all.” Hannibal sounded a breathless. “You would have been more than welcome.”

Will scrubbed at his face, wishing the heat would die down but it was only getting worse. “I like you... I want to take things slow... Or at least my brain does.” Will joked. *Get your foot out of your mouth idiot!*

Hannibal laughed lightly. “We can go as slow as you like Will, I’m not going anywhere.”

Will tried to muffle the sigh that escaped. “Ok. The following Monday then?” He blurted out quickly to cover his embarrassment.

“I will only just be back in town and won’t have had chance to stock my pantry, but perhaps we could go to a restaurant and then take it from there?”

“Yes, sure. Sounds fine.” Will felt a little flustered now that another date was on the cards. Seeing Hannibal again in person was a little daunting, but even more so was the time he’d have to wait.

“Maybe I could call you again sometime before then? Just to say hello?” Hannibal asked gently, as though he could sense Will was feeling a little overwhelmed.

“I... I’d like that.”

*

They had talked on the phone several times between dates. One late evening call Will had been tempted to ask if Hannibal would like to do more than talk. His nerves got the better of him and he was left jerking off alone after the call ended, imagining Hannibal’s soft voice telling him where to put his hands.

He’d agreed to meet Hannibal at the restaurant but for some stupid reason he went to his house instead. He thought if he got there early enough he could pick Hannibal up and drive them both in the one car. Economical, ecological, he told himself. The real reason, he thought Hannibal would guess, was if they took one car they had to leave together. He’d have to give Hannibal a ride home and maybe he might kiss him on the doorstep. Maybe more. He did want to take it slow, but the memory of their kiss at Abby’s party had him hoping that upon seeing him there Hannibal would insist on forgoing dinner altogether in favour of spending the night making out on his sofa.

He checked his watch as he pulled up, Hannibal would need to leave about now to get there so he should catch him. He straightened his tie and checked his breath before getting out of the car and heading up the path. His heart fluttered a little as he rang the bell.

“Hi?” The woman was about his age and attractive, strikingly so, well dressed - the sort of person who lived in this sort of house. With Hannibal. “Can I help you?”

“Oh, uh... I...” Will was thrown. Girlfriend? Wife? He felt so stupid. Of course Hannibal was too good to be true. “I uh, was looking for Hannibal?” He finally managed.

“Oh, you just missed him. Can I help?” She was eyeing him over now, probably taking in his clothes, his need of a haircut. How could he be so stupid! “I’m Mischa, Mischa Lecter.”

“Hannibal’s uh, oh... ok.” Mrs Lecter. Great. “I’m sorry to have bothered you.” He turned quickly and left not caring if he seemed rude.

He was halfway back to his place when he pulled over the car and slammed his hands on the wheel. This was why he didn’t date, shit like this. The first time he’d met someone that wasn’t put off by his “baggage”, threatened by the fact that he had a daughter with another woman, or generally wasn’t patient enough to deal with what Alana called his *eccentricities*, and this happens! He pulled out his phone, wanted to message Margot and but was so pissed off he knew he’d only angrily vent at her and tell her she should never have stuck her nose in. But in truth it wasn’t her fault, if the mommies hadn’t pushed him he’d have likely messaged Hannibal about the date anyway. It might have just taken him a little longer is all.

He was lost in his thoughts when his phone buzzed in his hand, surprising him. It was Hannibal.

- Are you ok Will? The table was booked for thirty minutes ago, I’m a little worried.

He felt a cold stab of hurt run through him. How could he be so casual about cheating on his wife? About making a liar and a cheat of Will without him even knowing? Or did Mischa Lecter know? Will might be used to unconventional parenting arrangements but that didn’t mean he was up for being someone’s bit on the side whether his wife knew or not.

- Maybe you can invite your wife along instead. I won’t be coming.

There was no response. He waited ten minutes, his hands itching and bile rising. He tapped out *fuck you asshole* but deleted it, threw his phone in the back of the car and continued home.

*

When Will got into the house he let Winston and Buster out before pulling off his jacket and tie and throwing them over the back of the couch. He considered for a moment retrieving his phone from the back of the car, but decided against it, reaching instead for a tumbler and the bottle of whiskey.

A few glasses later he realised the same song was playing for the third time. *How long has this CD been on repeat?* He was foggy and tired but seemed to have dozed and slept off some of the whiskey judging by how light the bottle was. The dogs were asleep in their beds and he didn’t blame them one bit for steering clear.

He’d give himself the night to wallow and be pissed off. Tomorrow he would get over it, move on. Wouldn’t be the first date he’d had go bad, even if the thought stabbed him in the chest. It wasn’t like they’d taken it further. He poured another glass of whiskey and lifted the glass in toast to the sleeping dogs.

“Here’s to avoiding a fucking mess. Just let that be a lesson, no one is worth your time in the long run.” He huffed the words out at the dogs, neither of which stirred but he took no offense, going back the whiskey.

He must have dozed again because then he was being woken up by a knocking on the door. It was loud. Too loud for the time of night and Will felt instantly near sober as his mind raced ahead with thoughts of an emergency. Abigail! Why else would someone come banging on his door in the middle of the night? In his hurry he stumbled as he got to his feet, barrelling towards the door. His heart pounding, his phone was in the car, what if something had happened and they hadn't been able to get hold of him?

He opened the door and was confronted by the broad back of someone leaving the porch. The man turned at the sound of the door opening.

"Hannibal? Is everything..." His thoughts reordered, clicking into place. It wasn't an emergency, it wasn't Abigail. It was this asshole. "Why are you here?"

"Will I-"

Will raised his hand to stop Hannibal, pushed past him and went to the car. He practically wrenched the back door off its hinges in opening it and started digging around for his phone. He only managed to find it because the little notification light was blinking green at him. He pulled out of the car with it in hand, starting to scroll through it as he headed back to the house. He needed to make sure he hadn't missed anything important, he'd never forgive himself.

"Fuck." His blood chilled as he saw several missed calls from Margot and Alana. There were a bunch of texts too which would not load fast enough as he started to feel sick at the thought of them not being able to get hold of him. He ignored the ones from Hannibal and went straight to Margot's.

"Will, I'm-"

Will wheeled around on Hannibal as he got back to the door. "What do you want Hannibal? I have shit I need to deal with right now. And... I'm not doing this. I'm not expending this energy. Just... just fuck off, ok?" He went inside and closed the door, managing not to slam it in his anger.

Finally Margot's first text loaded. And then the next, and the next. He scrolled through them, feeling mixture of emotions he couldn't quite pull apart.

-Babe, you're boyfriend is here. He said you're not answering your phone. Did you guys have a fight? He's asked us for your address, are you happy with us giving it? Do you just want to call him?

-Ok Will, I've given him like three cups of coffee. I need to put Abby to bed, can you get back to me. I don't want to give him your address if you're not ok with that.

-Ok, this is getting ridiculous. Why aren't you answering? Can you call me or Alana asap? We're getting worried!!!!

-Hannibal just told us about the text you sent him, I think he wanted to sort it between the two of you. Look, I know how you get, I'm worried. He's explained the whole thing

and I think you should call him and sort this out.

-Will, seriously. I AM REALLY FUCKING WORRIED. Please can you answer one of us? We just want to know you're ok and haven't drunk yourself a coma or some stupid shit.

-I HAVE GIVEN HANNIBAL YOUR ADDRESS AND HE IS COMING TO CHECK ON YOU!!! YOU BETTER BE OK OR I WILL FUCKING SLAP YOU STUPID!!

Holy shit! Will was trembling. He looked at the time of the first text. He'd put them through hours of worry. Tears pricked his eyes and his chest was so tight it hurt. How could he have been so fucking stupid?

-Margot, I am so sorry. I'm fine. Yeah I'm a little drunk. I left my phone in the car. I'm so sorry!! I will make this up to you guys. I love all three of you <3 I will come over tomorrow.

He sent the message and then heaved out a sob he'd been holding in. He wanted to scream. He wanted to blame Hannibal, but it had been his choice to act like a child and throw his phone like a toddler having a tantrum. He knew better than that, he knew he had responsibilities. What if those messages had been about Abigail?

There was a light knocking at the door and Will hesitated. He hadn't forgotten about Hannibal but maybe wished or hoped the man had removed himself so that this didn't need to happen. He really didn't want Hannibal to see him like this. Not that he should care. He didn't want to talk to him at all, he moved to the door but didn't open it.

"It's over Hannibal, please leave!"

"Will, your friends are worried about you I said I'd-"

"I've already messaged Margot, you don't need to be here. I'm sorry you came all this way, but you need to just go." The force behind his words weakened as he said them and he pressed his hand against the door, as if he could feel the man on the other side. He hated this. He had started to like Hannibal. *How could I have been so stupid?*

"Well, *I'm* worried about you. I didn't understand your message and received no responses to my own. Can... Can I come in for a moment to make sure you are ok?"

"No Hannibal!" Will exploded at that. "I'm not a child, I'm not your patient. I'm not your fucking boyfriend. What I am is... is a sap you thought you could have some fun with. Well, you didn't count on me showing up at your place when your wife was home huh? God, I'm so stupid! No wonder you wanted to put off dinner at your place! Do I even want to know how you were going to get rid of her for the evening? I bet this isn't even the first time is it?" He was hot with rage now, he almost wanted to throw open the door so he could shout in the man's face.

"You... went to my house?"

“Yes, I fucking went to your house, like an idiot, I was going to surprise you.” He felt a little sick at the thought.

“So you met Mischa.” There was a note of realisation there and Will hoped that it was followed by several things: shame, contrition, getting the fuck off his porch.

“Got it in one!” Will snapped.

“My sister. Mischa.”

No. That couldn't be. Had Hannibal mentioned having a sister? They hadn't discussed family much beyond Abby and the mommies. Maybe that was more a third date topic of conversation?

“You... didn't mention you had a sister.”

“No. Do you have any siblings Will?” Hannibal's voice gave nothing away, there wasn't anger or sarcasm there. Will wished he could see his face.

“I'm an only child.” Will said the words softly. He was still trying to process the entire evening whilst at the same time feeling like he was a child after all - one caught overreacting to a silly mistake. Was that woman really his sister? He could see the resemblance now he thought about it. *Damn it all to hell!*

“And now we know that about each other.” Hannibal seemed to sigh out the words. It was late, he was likely tired. Will knew he was shattered himself before expending all this energy on worry and anger.

Will opened the door. Hannibal looked weary but gave a weak smile by way of a greeting.

“It's late, maybe you shouldn't drive back tonight.” Will found himself saying as he stepped aside as an invitation and Hannibal walked into his house.

*

When Will had pictured himself saying those words to Hannibal, they had been a line and he had been grinning, maybe even winking. But that wasn't how it turned out, and now he was making up the couch with some spare sheets whilst Hannibal was using the bathroom.

Hannibal returned, his clothes piled in his hands, and he was stripped down to his t-shirt and boxers. Will looked away. This wasn't how he'd imagined first seeing Hannibal in his underwear.

“I hope you don't mind me making myself comfortable?” Hannibal asked. There was a slight note of humour there but no teasing. Will sighed inwardly, he wanted to make quip back but it felt so out of place now.

“No. Of course, it's fine. I'm... I'm just sorry about all this. I'm sure this evening wasn't meant to end with you camped out on my lumpy couch.” Will tried to laugh, but it fell a little flat.

“Will.” Hannibal had set his clothes down and placed his hand on Will’s arm. Will turned to look at the man. “I’m sorry that tonight happened the way it did, but actually, I think the end result might have been the same.” Hannibal beamed a smile that drew one from Will.

“Yeah? How’s that?” Will chuckled.

“Well, with my little sister’s impromptu visit I could hardly take you back to mine to make out on the couch... which is where I had been hoping the evening might go.”

Will laughed. Something within him broke and lightened. He still had grovelling to do the next day with the mommies, but at least with Hannibal things seemed like they would be ok.

Hannibal’s hand slipped down his arm and took hold of Will’s hand, raising it to his lips and pressing a gentle kiss to it. Will shivered.

“Is this ok Will?” Hannibal looked at him and waited for his nod, which was quick and eager.

Another kiss to his hand followed before Hannibal drew him in, kisses feathering over his neck and up to his jaw. Will found he was holding still, holding his breath.

“I’ve thought of nothing else but kissing you again.” Hannibal muttered against his skin. “It has been very distracting. I think I may start to get complaints from my patients.”

Will let out his breath then on a light chuckle. “Only one problem - I don’t have any cotton candy.”

“I am quite sure you are sweet enough without it.” Hannibal replied warmly as he moved his lips up to Will’s

Will laughed into the kiss and drew back. “That was terrible.”

“The kiss?” Hannibal seemed mortified.

“No, the joke.” Will’s laugh faltered into a sigh. “This whole evening has been a joke thanks to me. I’m really-”

“Please don’t apologise Will. We can talk about it tomorrow when we are both rested and you are completely sober.”

Will nodded. “I guess I’d better let you get some sleep.” He went to step away from the couch but Hannibal gently grabbed his arm.

“Sit with me a while?” Hannibal looked up at him through lidded eyes and drew Will down to the sofa with him without waiting for an answer.

Will could feel the bed sheets were cold even through the smart jeans and shirt he was yet to change out of from the date that never happened. There was warmth where Hannibal pressed against him, and his heart fluttered expectantly as he waited to be kissed again. But instead, Hannibal pulled him close, their legs a little entangled.

“Can I assume you still want to take things slowly Will?” Hannibal’s voice was rough, but not pushy.

“I uh, yeah... I’m sorry. I just need... This isn’t a one night stand, I need to...”

“Please, you don’t need to explain.”

Will frowned. He really did need to explain, about Molly. He wanted to, but that could wait until morning too. “Is that ok for you?”

“Of course.” Hannibal replied emphatically. “I want to get to know you Will. As you might have guessed from our first meeting, I find you very attractive, but there is more here than a physical attraction. I want you to set the pace, I want you to be comfortable.”

“Ok.” Will smiled. “Thank you.”

“Perhaps I can be forward enough to presume that I may continue to kiss you?”

“Yes please.” Will practically sighed. And then Hannibal drew back from him so that he could lean in and press their lips together. Slow, gentle and sensual. Will felt like a teenager as their mouths slid together, fit together. He was reminded of the few pre-college make out sessions he could count on one hand. So innocent on reflection, but at the time they had felt daring, illicit.

It was this thought in mind as his hand wandered to Hannibal’s thigh. He didn’t want to give mixed signals, but if he was setting the pace then he was sure Hannibal wouldn’t expect more than he could give. He kneaded the flesh there, fingers brushing against the abundant hair on the man’s thighs. He wished he was only in his underwear too. Even moreso when Hannibal’s hand mirrored Will’s action - sliding across to his thigh. Will’s breath hitched a little but the movement spurred him on, he was kissing Hannibal hungrily now, moving his body in small but significant ways in order to better entangle them.

He felt Hannibal hesitate for a moment and Will immediately knew why - the movement had caused his hard cock to press against Hannibal’s thigh. He felt Hannibal shudder as he breathed out his name - “Will...” he pulled back from the kiss and looked at Will intently.

“May I? Can I touch you?”

Will swallowed thickly and then nodded slowly.

His head dropped back against the sofa and a low moan rumbled through him as Hannibal’s hand ghosted over his hardness through his jeans. Hannibal began stroking him, the friction was wonderful and Will felt his cock twitch, aching for more. He wanted his hand, his mouth - he wanted Hannibal. He wanted him so much it sent a fire through all the nerves in his body.

“No, wait.” Will panted and Hannibal stilled but did not remove his hand. “I... I want to... touch and... It’s just...”

“Please, Will. You have no need to explain, we agreed you would set the pace. I apologise if I...” Hannibal’s words were gentle as he hand moved back to Will’s thigh and rested there.

“No, no. I’m sorry...”

“Don’t be.” Hannibal smiled, leaning in for another kiss. That much at least was just fine by Will.

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Will wasn’t sure when the kissing had stopped. All he knew was that he had an ache in his shoulder from the awkward angle he’d dozed off in. Morning light flooded through the windows, he was surprised it hadn’t woken Hannibal as well. They were still tangled together, though somehow a blanket had found its way over them. There was something all too nice and easy about waking wrapped up in Hannibal.

He managed to extricate himself without waking the man, getting up and letting the dogs out into the sunshine. When he shut the door and turned back, Hannibal had automatically sprawled into the space that he had been occupying. Will huffed a laugh and studied the man. If he was attractive whilst awake, he was absolutely striking whilst asleep. Like something classical sculptors might carve. He watched a few minutes, smiling as the doctor’s eyes started to flutter open. Hannibal blinked a few times then focused on him as he smiled.

“What is it Will?”

Will shrugged helplessly. The man was smart, a doctor, funny - bad jokes aside - sort of sassy. Fucking beautiful. Will grinned - “It wasn’t that crazy an assumption you know. To think that you were married. I mean, how have you remained single?”

Hannibal’s smile grew and Will was surprised to see his cheeks redden a little. “I guess I’ve been waiting for the right person.”

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Will finally has dinner at Hannibal's place and isn't sure how much longer he can take it slow!

Will didn't have classes scheduled, though he should probably get some paperwork done, and Hannibal said he only had afternoon appointments, so they were able to enjoy a lazy morning after a night on the couch. Will made them eggs and bacon. Hannibal ate it in his underwear and Will was still in last night's clothes.

"I'd still like to cook for you sometime." Hannibal smiled at him across the small table.

"Is that a comment on my food? We can go out if you like." Will laughed.

"Not at all. It certainly suits the rustic setting." Hannibal grinned.

Will let out a light laugh and forked some more eggs into his mouth. It was nice and easy and domestic and felt a little too good.

"Look, Hannibal, I know you don't need me to explain anything, but... I think I need you to know why I want to take things slow. I was married." Will rushed the words out before he lost his nerve. "It was... it didn't work out. Molly was great, we met in college. We were too young really, we didn't really know what we were doing. We were best friends as much as anything. We married just after graduation and then spent three hellish years trying to make it work in the real world. We just... we weren't good for each other. It maybe..." Will sighed.

"It maybe didn't help that I wasn't upfront with her about being bisexual. And I wasn't honest with myself that maybe I leaned more towards guys. But... at the time I hadn't been too sure of myself and I was with a woman so it seemed..." he waved it away with his hand.

"She's wonderful, really. We stayed in touch, once we got over it all and became friends again - I mean, we'd been close. Before everything we found each other interesting, so it was at least good to reclaim that. She remarried, this great guy Walter, they have a kid. But we were awful for each other, to each other. I just... I have Abby to think about now too, I can't do that again. I need to be really sure about things. I've pretty much avoided getting serious since, until..." Will trailed off, but knew Hannibal understood from his soft smile.

Hannibal nodded. "Thank you for telling me, Will. I appreciate it."

Will huffed a light laugh. "Ridiculous to be so prudish considering you came to her party and she already adores you, but, it's... I can't. I gave everything to Molly, I lost myself a little and sex just... it's-"

“-intimate.” Hannibal breathed out the word.

Will grinned. “I was going to say fun. I imagine you’d be quite fun.” Will sipped at his coffee and looked over the mug at Hannibal.

“Oh yes, I believe so. Would you like references?”

“Hmm, I think about it.” They were grinning at each other like idiots and Will wanted to run his foot up Hannibal’s bare leg. “In the beginning it’s easy to get distracted from the problems if the sex is good. Fun. And then you’re in too deep and it’s too late and it gets hard to fix or know when to call it a day.”

Hannibal nodded again. “We’ll go at your pace, Will.” He took a sip of coffee and looked at Will thoughtfully. “I know you are happy with kissing, how do you feel about hand holding?” A small smile quirked his lips.

“Oh, I’m a fan from way back.” Will was smiling so much his face was starting to ache a little. The truth was, he was a really tactile person, especially in relationships. He would love to kiss and hold hands and much, much more, he just knew himself well enough to know it would be too easy to let that get the better of him.

He was brought back from his thoughts when Hannibal reached across the table and took hold of his hand, stroking the back of it with his thumb.

“May I make a proposal?” Hannibal asked.

“Why, Doctor! So soon?” Will joked but then nodded.

Another small smile. “In the interest of your being comfortable, how about I agree now that I am happy for you to touch me in any manner at any time and will not expect to be allowed to touch you in return unless you ask me to?”

Will laughed. “Hannibal, that seems-”

“-fun?”

“I was going to say, inappropriate. I’d feel like I was taking advantage.”

“Not at all, not if I have agreed beforehand. I will of course reserve the right to decline the attention should I so wish.”

Will was still smiling but Hannibal was looking a whole lot more serious. “Ok.” Will gave a curt nod.

“Good. I’m glad that’s settled. Perhaps it might resolve this issue you’ve had all morning of looking at my thighs.”

Will nearly spat out the coffee he had just sipped and he started laughing again. “Here I was thinking you hadn’t noticed.”

“I’m very observant.” Hannibal replied in a mock scoff.

Will nodded and laughed. Another sip of coffee before he had to ask - “so, how did you know that I was interested in guys? When you asked me out, or rather - bribed my daughter into selling me to you?”

Hannibal cocked his head a touch as though remembering. “I don’t know that I did. I thought you attractive, I was amused by your manner. I found you interesting and wanted to know you better. I took a chance. The worst you could have done was say no.”

“Hannibal, the worst I could have done was sock you on the jaw! Lucky for you I lean that way... and may have thought you were pretty hot, with your nice suit and gorgeous cheekbones.” Will hid his grin and his blush behind his coffee mug.

A wonderful and warming smile grew on Hannibal’s face just seconds before he jumped in his seat - clearly surprised when Will ran his foot up his calf.

Will grinned. “So... Wanna make out on the couch for a bit?”

Hannibal, fully composed once more, set his coffee down. “It would be rude to say no.”

*

“Will Graham, I am not sure I want to see your face right now!” Margot opened the door and then walked away, leaving it open for him to come in.

“Ugh, Mogs, I’m sorry. Don’t make me feel more of an asshole than I already do.” He was at least glad that Abby would be at school and Alana at work. Margot mostly worked from home unless she had to go in for meetings - family businesses could be flexible he guessed.

She stopped and glared at him. “Believe me when I tell you that you are lucky Alana had to go into work today.”

He knew it was a fact. He could imagine the scenario. Margot - his best friend since his first job out of college, mother of his child, would have been going completely nuts. Alana, not the same kind of connection but also close, and incredibly protective over her wife and child - would have remained calm for Margot’s sake whilst thinking up ways to dismember him.

He followed her through to the kitchen and she poured out two mugs of coffee.

“Ok. Let me hear it then.” She huffed.

“Well... it’s like I text you. I was a fucking idiot. I was mad at Hannibal so I threw my phone and forgot all about it until he turned up on my doorstep. I just... you know I can never apologise enough so you just need to let me know what I can do to make it up to you guys.”

Her eyes narrowed in on him again and he felt a shiver over his skin.

“Did Abby-”

“She was in bed, she doesn’t know anything.” Margot sipped at her coffee.

Will nodded. “Ok, well. If it helps I already feel fucking terrible. I accused Hannibal of having a wife... but she was his sister.”

Margot cracked a little grin, completely involuntary, and tried to hide it. “Oh my god Will. How do you function as a human being?!”

He groaned. “Please! Just tell me what I can do to make it up to you guys?”

Her eyes narrowed again and she cocked her head, considering him closely. “Ok, all is forgiven. But Alana and I will come up with something for you to make this up to us. And you have to do it, no questions asked.”

“Well... I can’t really say no, can I?” *as much as I want to!* He could only imagine the sort of embarrassing and possibly painful torture they might concoct for him. Not that he didn’t deserve it!

“No, dear Will. You really can’t.” Margot’s smile was just a little terrifying.

*

The morning of making out with Hannibal had done nothing to slow things down for Will. His brain and body were yet again at odds - he needed to take it slow and make sure this was going to work, even if his body was screaming for something else entirely. Something not at all helped by the sweet and tender kisses Hannibal had given him after breakfast, or the hard and rough ones when they said goodbye.

At least they weren’t able to see each other in person until the weekend, which was a blessing and a curse as they ended up on the phone every night and Will was getting more frustrated by the day. He was daily tempted to ask Hannibal if he wanted to indulge in some phone sex, but knew he had to hold back. Frankly, he wasn’t sure he was ready to hear Hannibal cum and then not want to replay it in person.

Taking it slow was a little inevitable anyway, considering for their next date Hannibal had invited him over for dinner so he could cook for him, but his sister was still visiting. Will wasn’t even sure he’d be staying over. Hannibal hadn’t asked, and Will wasn’t going to bring it up. He threw a change of clothes and toothbrush on the backseat of the car just in case and then tried to forget about.

He parked on the street and it was Hannibal who answered the door. The doctor practically ripped the door open and looked unreservedly excited to see him.

“Waiting there long?” Will chuckled, trying to hide the fluttering he felt in response to the eagerness.

Hannibal just smiled and pulled him up the last step and into a slow and lingering kiss. Will was on the verge of melting when a soft cough sounded behind them. He pulled instantly

back, leaving Hannibal to stumble after him. The cough was replaced by a tinkle of light laughter -

“Really Hanni, you could at least take his coat first! So rude!”

Hannibal stepped to the side. “Will, I believe you've met my sister, Mischa.”

Mischa smiled and then narrowed her eyes slightly, as she tried to recall. “Oh, yes, you dropped by that day.”

Will smiled and nodded, hoping his relief wasn't entirely obvious. He was glad Hannibal didn't appear to have shared the events of that farcical night with his sister.

Mischa Lecter, now that he actually looked at her, was clearly Hannibal's sister. They had the same defined cheekbones, hers set in a slightly rounder, more feminine face. Her dark hair was cut into a soft bob just above her shoulders. She wore a little makeup, but much like most of the women in his life - she was a natural beauty.

As beautiful as she was - as far as Will was concerned - she was nothing compared to Hannibal.

Will took in the grandeur of the house as he was shown through to the dining room. It wasn't just that it was as big and fancy as other houses on the street, it was the decor. There was an obvious abundance of wealth, something beyond the salary of a doctor as far as Will could tell - but it wasn't ostentatious or in your face. A lot of the really fancy stuff looked old, like family heirlooms or something. And then there was the mix in of modern things - it felt like old world and new world colliding. It felt like Hannibal.

“Some wine Will?” Mischa offered as Hannibal pulled out a seat for him. He nodded and she poured. The dining room was also grand. There was a whole damn wall full of herbs! Who had an indoor herb garden? The table was huge, Will wasn't even sure how many it would seat as he started to lose count. There were place settings at one end, the head of the table and then one either side - one of which was where Hannibal seated him.

“I will be right back with food.” Hannibal smiled at him and then threw a glance at Mischa who returned a devilish smile as she took her seat opposite Will. Will didn't have a sibling but was pretty sure that look was something along the lines of *don't talk shit while I'm gone*.

As soon as the door closed she shifted into Hannibal's seat and leaned on her elbows, closer to Will. Seeming suddenly much younger.

“Ok, I want to know everything about the guy who has my brother so flustered!”

“Flustered!” Will laughed. “No, I don't think so. I've never met anyone so in control in my life.”

“Oh yes, of course, on the surface. But a sister can tell these things. Plus he gets this kind of dreamy look when he talks about you. Which he does, ad nauseum.” She was grinning at him and Will could only smile weakly in return, very much aware of the heat rising in his cheeks.

“I...” Will was saved by Hannibal coming back into the room, expertly balancing three small plates.

Hannibal’s face hardened but he clearly stopped himself short of frowning, which only drew a wider grin from Mischa as she fluidly move back to her own seat and Hannibal set down the food.

“[Cajun fried frogs’ legs with pistachio dust.](#)” Hannibal smiled. “You mentioned on a call that you grew up in Louisiana - I aimed for Louisiana fare in your honour, but I fear I missed the mark as I was unable to acquire the quality of catfish I wanted.” Hannibal seemed nervous, which surprised Will a little.

“It looks delicious.” Will meant it. He wasn’t one for fancy food but he was deeply flattered that Hannibal had gone to so much effort to make something so beautiful for him and share with him one of his passions. Even enough to make him amenable to eating frogs’ legs.

“Thank you Will.” Hannibal smiled at him and looked genuinely pleased as he sat down.

“Hannibal, I was asking Will about himself, but you rudely interrupted. Maybe you can fill in the blanks?” Her tone was light but her grin marked her as clearly teasing.

Will saw Hannibal’s eye twitch ever so slightly and then his jaw clenched. Before either of them could reply Mischa continued -

“So, you know... what he does for a job? does he have a family? Any bad habits? Does he snore for example? Or hog the covers?” She was barely keeping a straight face and Will realised immediately that Hannibal had probably endured a lot of ribbing over not coming home the night he ended up on Will’s couch.

Will wasn’t sure whether the redness rising up Hannibal’s neck was rage or embarrassment.

“I, uh...” Will jumped in. “Teacher, daughter... no worse than your brother.” Will answered quickly as he remembered the questions.

Mischa looked at him intently for a moment before her face cracked into a hearty laugh that had her rocking back in her chair. “Oh ok, I totally get it. I really understand why he likes you. You are exactly what he needs.”

“Mischa!” Hannibal admonished, he looked down and sighed. “You are... being impertinent.”

“Oh Hanni. I’m sure your Cookie can handle a little friendly banter...” her words trailed off and Will looked over to see that Hannibal was now glaring at her, his face burning red.

“Cookie?” Will wasn’t sure he wanted to know but he asked anyway.

“Will I...” Hannibal was flustered. He wasn’t sure what he had missed, but Hannibal was clearly embarrassed. Will wasn’t sure what to do, how to process it. On one level it was deeply amusing, but on another he was sure he was meant to be doing something to make him feel better. *Is this how people feel around me?*

“Oh my god.” Mischa was grinning when she clapped her hands over her mouth. “Oh Hannibal! I’m...” she started to giggle. “I just thought you might have mentioned it to him...” she broke off into laughter.

Will looked between them, still confused. “What am I missing?”

“Will... I...” Hannibal was completely red and fidgeting, avoiding eye contact.

“What?” Will was unsure whether to be amused or uncomfortable.

“He calls you Cookie.” Mischa blurted out on a laugh. “Not to your face apparently... that’s what he calls you.”

There was a clunk of crockery and wood as Hannibal’s elbows hit the table hard and he buried his face in his hands.

Ok. It was amusing. Not the most flattering of nicknames, but Will understood. He was one of the cookies in the bargain with Abigail. Hopefully a much more prized cookie than the others.

Will broke into a smile, moving a hand under the table to squeeze Hannibal’s thigh in reassurance as he teased. “But... Hannibal honey, you hate cookies!”

Hannibal groaned and looked up again, his defeated gaze flicking between the grins on Will and Mischa’s faces.

*

Will liked Mischa.

She had the same ease about her as Hannibal though came across as a little less cool and in some ways his opposite. He could imagine she was quite the handful as a child and she sort of reminded him of Abby. She was crazy smart, like Hannibal, and had that same air of distinction and grace. Her accent wasn’t quite as pronounced and she could easily pass for American if he didn’t know she originally wasn’t.

Dinner with them had been fun. Once Mischa finally stopped teasing Hannibal, which Will had to admit he enjoyed immensely, they talked about her a little. She was enthusiastic about her work but seemed distant and cold about her home in Los Angeles and going back there. Will had been astounded to find that Mischa’s *little jewelry line* as she referred to it, was actually the massive Brand L which Margot totally adored. What started as a teenage love of jewelry making and a head for numbers turned into a multi-million dollar company. Will was a little in awe of her success, but more so of how down to earth she was for it.

After dinner, Mischa excused herself saying she had some paperwork to go over and retired to her room. Will could imagine with such a big business to run she must be pretty busy, but he still had the feeling that she had just wanted to give them time alone. He was only too happy about that.

Hannibal guided Will into the study, another ridiculously beautiful room - just the right side of lavish, and poured them both another drink.

“Oh, are you driving home Will?” Hannibal asked as he was about to hand over the glass.

Will hesitated. He hadn’t explicitly planned on staying over, but when he was drinking glasses of wine over dinner with no thought about it at all, he guessed hadn’t not planned to either.

“I... can call a cab.” Will smiled.

“There... is a guest room.” Hannibal handed him the glass and their fingers brushed together for a moment.

Will smiled gently as Hannibal’s hand fell away. He sipped the wine as he moved to the low burning embers already smoldering in the fireplace.

“This is nice. This room, the whole house actually.”

Hannibal smiled. “Family money. Mischa and I were lucky enough to take advantage of the best education and opportunities that money could buy. But we’ve also worked hard to make the most of that start. It didn’t...” Hannibal paused for a moment, thoughtful but sort of sad. “It wasn’t always easy. Our parents died when we were quite young.”

Hannibal looked away and Will wanted to do nothing more in that moment than hold him. “Oh, Hannibal, I’m...” They had discussed parts of their childhood’s before, but briefly and usually in response to something specific.

Hannibal looked back, a gentle smile as he waved away Will’s words. “Think nothing of it, it was a long time ago. We were in an orphanage for some time until our estate was settled and our uncle was located. We went to live with him and resumed our childhood, after a fashion. We were fortunate really.”

Will didn’t fight the compulsion to move forward. He stopped when he stood immediately before Hannibal, cupping the man’s cheek in his hand. There was so much pain there that Will could do nothing about. Such a sadness in those eyes so deep brown they were almost maroon.

“It is... it can still be difficult to discuss. Even now.” Hannibal admitted.

“You don’t need to tell me anything. I just... I want you to feel... I want you to be happy.” Will swallowed down the lump in his throat.

“Would it be too forward of me to say that I have never been as happy as I have been since I met you, Will?” Hannibal looked so vulnerable. Here in his home, his own territory, after an evening of his sister’s teasing, he seemed so unguarded.

There was a tight feeling in Will’s chest. They had only seen each other a few times in person, even if they talked almost nightly on the phone. They laughed together and shared the sum of their days and each day Will felt closer and closer to the man. And there was this tight

feeling. And Will didn't want to name it because the thought of losing it once acknowledged was too painful to consider.

He only managed to breathe out the words - "I feel the same." *And so much more.*

Will wasn't sure how much time passed in silence. The crackle of the low fire behind them, the comfort of this wonderfully warm home that was so Hannibal. He realised in that moment that he could imagine spending the rest of his life with this man.

The thought was at once beautiful and terrifying. He'd never had anything move this quick before. He knew his mum would've said it only moves that fast when it's the right person. Beautiful and terrifying.

He cleared his throat and turned away. He was sure he heard a slight and seemingly involuntary sigh from Hannibal.

Will needed to move away from the intensity of it all. "So... um, Mischa seems lovely. Is she staying long? For Christmas." He immediately regretted his words. The holiday was almost upon them and this was the first they'd discussed it at all. Would they see each other? Would they buy each other gifts? He'd wanted to ignore their growing intimacy for a moment, not have them making plans. It suddenly felt so very overwhelming.

"We had planned Christmas together, but I am unsure if she will be returning to Los Angeles in the meantime." Hannibal's tone was casual, and Will was thankful that perhaps the moment of intensity had passed. He looked back to see Hannibal settling into an overstuffed leather sofa and taking a sip of his wine, a pleasant smile for Will. Will returned the smile and moved to the other end of the sofa, slightly turned to better talk.

"I don't mean to pry... when she spoke about Los Angeles, she seemed a bit..." Will started.

"She's a little down. I'm sure she wouldn't mind me saying. The weekend I was away it was to visit her. Her boyfriend left her, it's been difficult. She decided to come back with me, she needed a break." Hannibal explained and then took a sip of his wine. He lowered his glass with a lopsided smile. "You may have noticed that I find it difficult to deny my little sister anything."

"I noticed that she is ridiculously good at teasing you in a way that the mommies would love to tease me, but she can get away with it as she's your sister." Will chuckled, wondering if actually he didn't have it as bad as he thought. Nope, the mommies were terrors.

"We must each face our own harpies in this life." Hannibal grinned.

"Well... I have some time off coming up - the Academy closes for Christmas and New Year. I have paperwork but no classes. So... if you think she could do with some cheering up maybe I can help? Take her out for lunch?" Will asked tentatively. "Not just to try and extract more embarrassing information about you of course." He grinned over the rim of his glass.

"Oh, I would never imagine you to sink so low." Hannibal all but winked and then tilted his glass to Will. "Mischa on the other hand is-"

“-above such things?” Will joked.

“I was going to say, a menace.” Hannibal laughed. “But thank you, I’m sure she will appreciate the company. She doesn’t know many people in the area any more, most of her friends moved away.” He looked thoughtful for a moment. “Maybe you could introduce her to Margot and Alana?”

“Are you high?!” Will spat out his wine.

They both laughed.

*

The fire was almost out when Will realised how long they had been sat there chatting. He wasn’t sure at what point they had ended up leaning into each other on the sofa, only that it was after Hannibal had switched on a side lamp and fetched the wine bottle from the sideboard, setting it next to the sofa so he could keep topping them up.

At some point they’d lapsed into a comfortable silence and he leaned against Hannibal who was running a gentle hand back and forth along his thigh. It was comfortable in a way almost alien to Will in recent years - it had been a long time since he’d been so close to someone like this. It was only when he started to nod off that Will roused himself and sat forward.

“Will?”

“I think maybe I should get my stuff from the car and then you can show me to spare room?” Will chuckled. “I don’t think I can take another night on a sofa at my age.”

“Of course.” Hannibal smiled. There was a look in his eyes that told Will he was just happy to have him stay over.

When Will came back from the car, Hannibal was waiting at the foot of the stairs and guided him up. Again more new and old melded together - it felt like looking into Hannibal. It certainly gave him a better sense of the man. Knowing a little more of his parents and childhood added perspective.

The guest room was nice, a little more modern. None of the heirlooms as dotted around the rest of the house. It had an ensuite bathroom and towels were already laid out on the bed.

“Woah, you could rent rooms out.” Will joked. “This is lovely, thank you for letting me stay over.”

Hannibal gave him a lopsided grin. “Will, you don’t really need to thank me for letting you stay. You are more than welcome...” He clearly stopped himself short of something.

Will laughed. “It’s ok Hannibal, you can tell me you’d like me to stay over more, or in your room, or whatever it is that you think might overstep and scare me off. It won’t. I’m not going anywhere.”

“I don’t want to make you uncomfortable.” Hannibal’s smile was gentle as he reached for Will’s hand.

“You won’t. You don’t. I just want to take it slow, I’m not a nun.” Will laughed. “Geez, you don’t even want to know the amount of times I’ve jerked off thinking about you lately...” Will slapped his free hand to his face as Hannibal’s clenched firmly around his other. “Oh god, I didn’t just... ignore me. I’m tipsy.” He laughed.

Hannibal cleared his throat. “Oh Will...” the words were breathed out and the lust in the man’s eyes was completely clear. “I think I should... I’m going to go...” Hannibal let his hands slip and then near ran from the room.

“Nice job, idiot!” He fell back onto the bed, cock aching a little.

*

Twenty minutes later he was in his underwear when he went looking for Hannibal’s room. To apologise! He told himself over and over. Nothing more. Nothing more!

He had no idea how to find the right room and was terrified that he was going to go into Mischa’s instead. He was going to give up when he saw a door at the end of the corridor was slightly ajar with a soft glow of light coming from within. He moved along to it, reasoning that it wouldn’t hurt to peek.

He pushed the door slightly, enough to look in. The first thing he saw was a set of ornate Samurai armour.

“Will?” Hannibal asked quietly so Will slipped the rest of the way into the room. Hannibal was sat up in bed, naked at least from the waist up. The sight almost made Will lose his damn mind. Instead he bit down on his lower lip to avoid saying anything he might regret.

“I just wanted to... uh... to apologise for making things more difficult than... uh... I...”

Hannibal was moving to sit up further and all Will could think of was burying his face in that fuzzy chest.

Hannibal smiled softly. “I’m not a teenager Will, I assure you I can control myself. I’m sorry I left abruptly, I didn’t want to make you feel uncomfortable.”

“Oh, my level of discomfort around you is usually quite high under normal circumstances anyway.” Will chuckled. The laughter died off and he let himself acknowledge he may have had other reasons for coming to Hannibal’s room. “Can I be honest with you?”

“Of course.” Hannibal looked a little serious.

“I uh...” Will rubbed the back of his neck and willed himself not to blush. “I guess, as much as I’m not ready to move things on yet, I’m also not ready to um... say goodnight...”

Hannibal smiled and pulled back the covers. Will was grateful the man was at least wearing pajamas on his bottom half. He hesitated only a moment before he crawled in next to him.

Then hesitated again once he was in the bed. Hannibal lay back onto the pillows and a moment later, Will curled into the man, letting his head rest on Hannibal's chest. Hannibal leaned over and turned out his side lamp before pulling his arms around Will and settling back with a contented sigh. Will was just wondering how on earth he was ever going to get to sleep like this when he drifted off.

*

Will woke in one of the most comfortable beds he had ever slept in. All the better for the company. He stretched and looked over to see Hannibal was just waking too.

"Morning." Hannibal muttered and leaned over to kiss Will's cheek. His hand went to Will's hip and guided him away onto his side so that he could spoon up behind him. Will went willingly and melted back into the man behind him. It took every ounce of his being not to grind back on Hannibal's cock until it was hard and leaking.

Will clenched his jaw and squeezed his eyes shut. Why was he giving himself and Hannibal blue balls? The thought was immediately followed by an instant and reasoned argument from his brain. A reminder of how painful it would be if he got in too deep and then things didn't work out. *Stupid! Why am I resisting being intimate when I am clearly falling in love with him.* The thought Will had been trying to repress jolted through him.

He turned in Hannibal's arms and pushed the doctor onto his back, leaning in and kissing him. Hannibal laughed into the kiss and Will pulled back.

"I think... I want to be ready for more... I just... I can touch you anywhere? Like you said, and you won't... You'll hold back?"

"Please." Was all Hannibal breathed out, eagerness in his eyes.

Will moved up and over, straddling Hannibal before leaning in for another kiss. Their cocks pressed together as they both grew hard. Will pulled back, trailing kisses down Hannibal's neck and then to his chest, nuzzling any flesh he could.

Hannibal was tense beneath him and Will knew he was holding back this time. He was definitely fighting his instinct to thrust up against him. Will went back to his mouth as he started to grind.

When Hannibal moaned Will pulled back.

"Fuck. I need to..." all thoughts of anything other than Hannibal left his mind completely. He took in the mussed up hair and sleepy gaze. So soft. "I just... I want to watch you come apart..." Will swallowed thickly and moved back on Hannibal's thighs a little. Hannibal was panting, flat out on the bed and watching him intently as he took out both their cocks and gripped them together.

Hannibal looked like speech had been stolen from him. His mouth hung open as he continued to pant and watch as Will worked both their lengths together. His hands clenched in the

sheets and Will could feel he was even more tense than before as he fought whatever urge he had to fuck harder into Will's hand. Or to just take control and ravage Will.

"Will.. oh... I..."

"You're so beautiful Hannibal... I..." He bit back the words he wasn't ready to say.

Hannibal came first, but only by seconds as Will continued to work them both through the shuddering orgasm. Their mixed release ran over Will's hand and joined that which had splattered across Hannibal's chest and stomach. Will was tempted to lean in and lick up the cum - any excuse to run his tongue over Hannibal's tummy and chest.

"God! I needed that." Will laughed as he caught his breath. Hannibal's contented chuckle was music to his ears.

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Cookies, cuteness and Christmas!

“Well. Good morning.” Mischa all but winked at them when they came into the kitchen. Both dressed now and looking somewhat presentable, but even so Will had to admit there was a sort of post-orgasm glow about Hannibal that was hard to miss.

It didn't help that Hannibal had donned casual pants and a red sweater - looking about as dressed down as he could get fully clothed. Will found it pretty alluring. But maybe that had been their shared morning orgasm.

Maybe.

Will had grinned as they'd walked down the stairs, holding hands like young lovers. Laughing, giddy. *Damn giddy!* He wanted to tell himself to get a grip, but smiled the thought away, knowing he was perfectly happy to be giddy about Hannibal Lecter.

Hannibal had given Mischa a look that Will already suspected after one evening with the pair meant - *do not embarrass me!* - and then went preparing breakfast. Mischa kicked out a stool at the breakfast bar and pushed one of the already brewed mugs of coffee towards Will.

“So. You have a daughter - Hannibal described her as rightly precocious, which is Hannibal for adorable.” Mischa smiled at Will as he sat and took the coffee.

“Ha! Yeah she's adorable. In a hellion sort of way. Raised by harpies, it happens.” Will shrugged with a grin and he watched as Mischa's smile warmed. Hopefully he was making as good an impression on her as Hannibal had on Abby.

Will dug his wallet out of his pants and flipped open the photo of her with Winston and Buster. He passed it to Mischa.

“Oh! She is pretty cute. Especially with mud on her face.”

“Oh yes. It completes the look.” Will agreed.

“And dogs?... dog hair?” She sort of guffawed and looked at Hannibal who seemed to pointedly ignore her.

“Yeah...” He was sure he was missing something. “Just the two now. I had seven before we had Abby. I used to sleep in my living room before we had Abby.” Will laughed. “Kids are pretty life changing. Everything suddenly has sharp corners and apparently seven was way

too many dogs!” He smiled but Mischa looked like she was stifling a grin and Hannibal seemed to still be ignoring the topic. “What?” He finally asked.

Mischa chuckled. “Hannibal isn’t good with pets.”

“That is simply not true Mischa.” Hannibal replied tersely but didn’t look over.

“Oh Hanni!” the look she gave him was slightly withering. “Ok, it isn’t so much the animals themselves so much as the hair. It gets everywhere. He will complain for weeks about getting pet shed on his lovely pants.”

“They are lovely pants.” Will agreed with a grin before sipping his coffee and raising his eyes over the cup to Hannibal, who still didn’t look up.

“That is also an exaggeration but I refuse to split hairs.”

Will’s eyes went wide and Hannibal’s face showed no change at all, as he continued to concentrate on his preparations. Mischa on the other hand groaned.

“Did he just... was that a pun?” Will grinned.

Hannibal cleared his throat but otherwise showed no reaction to being talked about rather than to, nor the reaction to his joke.

“Oh boy. You better get used to those Will.” Mischa laughed before downing the rest of her coffee and jumping down from her stool. “I’m going to go shower. Leave you here with the hilarious Count.” She shook her head and chuckled as she left the room.

Will grinned over at Hannibal who was still refusing to look up. “I can put the dogs away when you visit. I mean... if... if you...”

Hannibal looked up sharply. “I would be happy to visit, and please, your dogs are fine” A small smile blossomed on Hannibal’s face and Will couldn’t resist leaning over the breakfast bar and jutting his jaw, waiting. Hannibal’s smile widened and he leaned into meet Will, kissing him deeply until the fat in the frying pan started to hiss.

Will was still smiling when he sat back onto the stool, watching Hannibal cook, with an adoring gaze. And then a thought struck him - “Wait. What did she say about a Count?”

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“I didn’t think it was important.”

Hannibal’s tone was cool, almost disinterested, as they sat eating the breakfast he had made of eggs cooked inside braided challah buns and sausages. Will shook his head and chuckled.

“You being nobility isn’t important? Were you ever going to tell me?”

Hannibal considered for a moment. “I suppose I would have. Eventually.”

“Oh god. Like a damn hallmark movie.” Will laughed. “You’d have sprung it on me after we got married.”

Hannibal brightened and grinned at him. “Is that a proposal?” The words were crooned with amusement.

“Don’t change the subject.” Will’s grin broke as he groaned. “Uh, a count! If I’d have known on our first date, I’d have run a mile.” Will chuckled.

“And now?”

“Hmm. Now, well... I don’t think I could get away with saying I haven’t grown fond of you.” Will replied and basked in the glow of Hannibal’s warm smile. “Very fond.”

“So, it makes no difference. It is just a title, a pointless one, even more so here in America.” Hannibal shrugged.

“Are you serious? Do you know how many fancy restaurants we could get good tables at if you booked it as Count Lecter rather than Doctor Lecter. Not that I would condone such behaviour of course!” Will couldn’t stop grinning at the absurdity of the whole thing. When did things like this happen to Will Graham? He’d randomly been fixed up on someone’s doorstep - they were smart, funny, attractive, so far pretty damn enjoyable in the bedroom, and nobility!

“Can I assume that this revelation would not deter you from *making out on the couch*?” He all but put the phrase into air quotes, and probably would have if he was anyone other than Hannibal Lecter.

Will grinned and nodded. “And they say romance is dead!”

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They were in Chuck E. Cheese so Will could take over with Abby. Everyone had eaten except him, he’d had a coffee - still nicely full from breakfast with Hannibal.

Christmas was fast approaching and he was starting to realise that it might be nice to include Hannibal in his plans. He had Abby now until Christmas Day - which he would spend with the mommies and Abby at their house. If he wanted to see Hannibal between now and then it would have to include Abby. Despite him having been at her birthday party, the thought of the three of them doing something together felt very serious. Too serious?

He’d never been in this situation before. They spoke so often, got on so well so quickly, he had to remind himself that they hadn’t known each other all that long, and now he was thinking about Christmas plans? It was terrifying.

He took a breath.

“You ok honey?” Alana looked across at him. Margot shifted next to him to throw him a concerned look.

“Yeah. Just. Nothing. It’s nothing.” He gave a weak smile. The look from Margot was clearly *stop over thinking things you idiot!* And she wasn’t wrong. She knew him terrifyingly well.

Abby jumped down from her seat next to Alana and scampered off to softplay. The mood felt heavy.

“He has a nickname for me.” Will instantly regretted saying it. It was hard work being teased so mercilessly by your best friends he really shouldn’t give them the ammunition.

Margot made a loud and amused sound of exclamation. And then - “Pay up.” She held out her hand to Alana who just laughed, pulling the hand toward her and kissing it.

“What?” Will wasn’t sure he wanted to know.

“Mogs bet that Hannibal had some cutesy nickname for you. I didn’t think he seemed the type.” She smiling as she shrugged.

“Yeah, you’d think. But actually he’s surprisingly sweet beneath the cool charm.” Will couldn’t help his smile.

“Oh you’ve got it bad, Graham!” Margot laughed and he nudged her with his elbow.

“So what is it?” Alana asked, leaning in slightly.

“Graham Cracker?” Margot ventured with a smirk. Will gave her an eye roll. “He can’t have sasshole! Well... I mean... he can have you plenty. Just not the name...” she quirked an eyebrow. “Or maybe he’s already had you plenty...?”

Will rolled his eyes again and felt a blush rise. “We’re... I need to take it slow.”

Two gazes of adoration poured over him and he thought for a moment they were going to ahh and ohh.

“Will. You... you really like him a lot don’t you?” Margot didn’t sound surprised as much as happy, but sharing in his caution. She gave him a gentle and reassuring smile.

“Yeah, I guess... I really do.” Will felt a wave an anxious excitement wash over him. He was falling for Hannibal Lecter. He knew that, but it was something else saying it out loud.

Margot leaned against him and squeezed his hand. “You got this Will, just enjoy it.”

He took a breath smiled.

“Ok!” Alana cut through the tension. “So, tell us the nickname.”

Will felt colour rise in his cheeks. “Oh god.” He rubbed his face. “I should never have mentioned it.”

“Oh come on Will... it’ll just be between us!” Margot squeezed his arm again.

“Worrying that you might tell other people is the last thing I’m afraid of.” Will chuckled.

Margot jabbed him in the ribs a couple of times, making him squirm.

“Fine, fine!” He blew out an exasperated sigh. “Cookie. He calls me cookie.”

“Ohmygod!” Margot clapped her hands to her mouth.

Alana was doing a very bad job at stifling a grin.

“Does he... call you this to your face?” Margot asked, trying not to laugh.

“No.” Will’s reply was gruff but amused.

“... Or any other part of your body?”

“Margot.” Alana was laughing despite trying to admonish her worse half.

“Yeah, yeah. Laugh it up.” He sighed even as he smiled. “I knew I shouldn’t have told you.”

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“Tell me something Will?”

“Yes?” Will smiled. Hannibal had started so many conversations this way. He sort of enjoyed how Hannibal wanted to get to know him. These starters had included questions about his job, his childhood, his favourite foods. Will was waiting for one of them to be suggestive, sometimes it felt like Hannibal was teasing him to think so.

“Do you have any Christmas traditions?”

“No...” Will clenched his jaw.

It was Monday night and Abby had just gone to bed. It was the first time he;d spoken with Hannibal since leaving his place after breakfast the previous morning. And yet in that time he had thought more than once about how he might see Hannibal over Christmas. *If* he should see Hannibal.

“No?” Hannibal’s tone was curious.

“Not really. I mean... we didn’t really celebrate much after mum died. Dad struggled. Celebrating anything was hard. We... I guess since Abby was born I’ve just fallen into something of a tradition - spending it with Margot and Alana. A couple of years ago my dad joined us, it was the year before he passed.” Will sighed. “Damn, I’m sorry... I didn’t mean for this to get heavy.” He sighed again, he knew it was because of his current mood. He could have answered differently - in tone if not content.

“It’s perfectly alright Will.” Hannibal paused as though considering something, the line nothing but dead air for a moment. “Would it be too forward to ask you and Abigail to join me on Christmas Eve? Myself and Mischa that is. We keep a family tradition of Kūčios - a traditional dinner on Christmas Eve. I’d be delighted if you would both join us, but I understand if-”

“Wow... I don’t know Hannibal.” Will sighed. “Can I be honest?”

“Please.”

“I’ve been thinking about Christmas a lot. What it means when you spend it with someone. I don’t want Abby to be... I don’t want...” He wasn’t sure what he did or didn’t want. He desperately wanted to spend more time with Hannibal, and would be doing so if it didn’t happen to be Christmas. That made it something else, something bigger.

“I understand Will. Please, think nothing of it.”

Will couldn’t read Hannibal’s tone at all and wished he could see his face. “Urgh. I’m doing this all wrong.”

“There’s no right or wrong. I just want you to be comfortable.”

Will nodded even though Hannibal wouldn’t be able to see. “Ok, well, now that just makes me feel like I’m... like it’s all about me. I don’t do well when things are one sided.” he signed. “Will you tell me what you want Hannibal?”

Another pause.

“I... I care for you a great deal. I am happy to go as slow as you wish because I see a future for us and if that means I wait a year for our first Christmas together, so be it. I know it will happen, I’m in no rush.” There was such confidence in those words that Will could imagine the gaze Hannibal would focus on him were they in the same room.

Will swallowed thickly. “Christmas eve... what time should we come over?”

*

The week with Abby had been great. School was out, he didn’t have classes and could do paperwork at home, so they had the whole week to hangout.

She insisted they spend much of the time making Christmas presents for the mommies and a couple of her school friends. When he told her, casually so as not to make a big deal, that they would be going to Hannibal’s for dinner on Christmas Eve, she said they should make one for him too. Will had already cut out the deer shapes in his workshop, Abby was going to decorate them with glued on decorative paper that she’d picked out at a craft store with him at the beginning of the week.

“Abby, I don’t know if Hannibal will want a gift, he just wants our company.” He was telling himself as much as anything, to justify not having bought anything. What did you buy for someone like Doctor - *Count* - Hannibal Lecter?

“Nobody wants a gift daddy, you just get them from people who love you.” Abby didn’t look up from her glueing. Will’s mouth fell open a little.

There didn’t seem any point in arguing with her. He let her decorate one of the deers in a print that she said was - “fancy and posh like Hannibal.”

*

“Hi.” Will smiled as Hannibal opened the door. Pretty sure the doctor was going to be mindful enough of Abigail to not greet him as enthusiastically as he had last time he’d been over to the house.

“Good evening.” Hannibal greeted them formally but with a smile. He crouched down and took Abby’s hand and shook it, which made her giggle, then stood and leaned and kissed Will on the cheek. “Please come in.”

Mischa greeted them once they were inside.

“Abigail, this is my sister Mischa.” Hannibal said as he took their coats.

Mischa crouched to Abby’s height. “Hey Abby. I hear you like cookies? Hannibal made some just for us, you want to help me get them from the kitchen?” She scampered off with Mischa without even looking back.

“Well, I guess she’s settled in.” Will chuckled. He was about to follow after them when Hannibal grasped hold of his hand and pulled him back and into a kiss. Deep and slow, it practically made his toes curl. He moved his arms up around Hannibal’s neck and allowed himself to be pushed gently to the wall next to the coat rack.

After a minute Hannibal pulled back and moved his lips against the crook of Will’s neck, sighing against the skin there. “I missed you.” Hannibal breathed out the words.

Will stiffened for a moment before relaxing again. “I... missed you too.” It was easier to admit than he thought it would be.

They looked at each other for a long moment before Abby came barrelling back down the hallway.

“Daddy, try one! Daddy!” She was excited as she offered up a small plate.

“Mushrooms?” Will asked with a smile first at Abby and then at Hannibal. He picked one up and sniffed it - it smelled sweet - chocolatey. He raised an eyebrow at Hannibal, who just grinned in response. He bit into it and smiled as a couple of crumbs made a bid for freedom. “Cookies?!” Will was equally surprised and impressed. He grinned at Hannibal as he swallowed the mouthful. “I thought you didn't like cookies?”

“There are always exceptions.”

Will smiled. He wanted to kiss Hannibal again and could tell Hannibal wanted to kiss him too.

*

Dinner was already laid out on the table and Hannibal explained that it was his own take on the traditional Kūčios meal of twelve dishes - one for each apostle. It was a Lithuanian tradition that he and Mischa kept each year. Abby seemed excited about being able to tell her

class all about the strange food and cookie mushrooms when school started back up. Will was... aching.

He ached to hold Hannibal. To thank him for including them, say how touched he was. This felt like something incredibly personal, he could only imagine how much it meant to Hannibal to include them. Will couldn't even convey it in a look. Instead he dropped his eyes to his feet and tried to clear his throat. He was more touched by the sentiment than he could have imagined. Maybe Hannibal's words on the phone had played on his mind. They hadn't known each other that long and yet they both saw a future.

"Mischa, could you show Abigail to the bathroom so she can wash up for dinner?" Mischa must have nodded because she didn't reply but then Will heard a door open and close. "Are you alright Will?"

Hannibal moved next to him and took hold of one of his hands.

"I don't know," Will admitted. "Sexually we can take things slow, but emotionally it's all so fast. I... That isn't something I can stop. I can't slow down my feelings and stop myself from..." he looked up into Hannibal's soft but concerned expression. "I have feelings for you that terrify me. I want this, I want you but I'm just... I'm scared." he took a breath. "I can't even say thank you right! I just wanted to thank you for this, it clearly means a lot to you." Will sighed out his frustration and relaxed, squeezing Hannibal's hands.

"I don't know what to say Will. You are very welcome to be here... I..." A micro-expression flickered across Hannibal's face - for the briefest of moments there was something like a frown there. "I'm holding back. You know that, I think we feel the same. And it is fast, and I've never felt like this before. I could be scared by the intensity of what we have but instead I chose to embrace it, and I will wait until you are ready to do the same. I understand why you are frightened by all of this, but..." he quirked a smile "I think you'd be much more comfortable if relaxed with yourself."

Will found himself smiling. "Is that your professional advice as a headshrinker?"

"If I say yes I may have to charge you for the consult, so let's say it is just advice between friends." Hannibal returned a soft smile, before leaning in and kissing Will's cheek. He moved his mouth to Will's ear and muttered "I'm glad to have you here, Will"

The door opened and Hannibal pulled back just as the girl's returned.

"Shall we?" Hannibal asked, dropping one of Will's hands to indicate the table with a flourish, but keeping hold of the other until they all took seats - Will next to him. Their legs brushed together as they sat.

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Dinner was beautiful. Each dish was delightful if slightly strange to Will's palate. Most if not all, he was sure he would never be able to pronounce... or maybe he would, with time. The thought warmed him. The idea of this becoming a tradition for he and Abby. For them as a family.

Hannibal smiled at him as Abby raved again about the mushroom cookies - meduoliai grybukai - or *muddy goobucks* as Abby was calling them. Will made a mental note to correct her and help her learn to pronounce it right.

“Well, perhaps as we have finished dinner now would be a good time to give gifts?” Hannibal said as he laid his napkin on the table.

“Oh, you didn’t need to-” Will started, hoping Hannibal hadn’t spent too much money. After all, he’d bought Abby a present on their second date.

“Nonsense, it is tradition.” Hannibal smiled and took his hand, squeezing it. There was a reassuring look there, as though Hannibal recognised his concern. “Shall we sit in the study?”

They all got down from the table and Abby immediately grabbed hands with both Mischa and Hannibal. Will smiled at the easy way they had with her. He’d become more wary of relationships when she had been born - he had rarely dated and only introduced one of those to her, a few dates in. It hadn’t worked out, Abby didn’t seem to notice the new person coming in and out of her life so quickly, but then she had been a lot younger then. There was no point worrying of course, since she’d met Hannibal before they started dating. Since, moreover, she’d essentially set them up.

On the small table in the study were a couple of gift boxes.

“Abigail, would you be so kind as to deliver a gift to your mothers from me?” Hannibal asked as they got to the table. Abby was all wide smiles and eager nodding. Hannibal tapped a confectionare box, wrapped with a neat bow. “Some meduoliai grybukai here for them. As you like them so much I am sure they might be persuaded to share.”

“Oh yes!” Abby replied, nodding all the more.

“And this is for you.” Hannibal took a large box, neatly wrapped, and set it on the floor by the sofa. Abigail went over immediately and sat. She was about to start ripping off the paper when Will cleared his throat.

“Abby, don’t you have something to say?” Will raised a brow at her.

“Oh, yeah... thank you Hannibal.” She turned a genuine smile on the man. “Did you bring his gift daddy?” Will nodded and motioned for her to continue.

She unwrapped the box and let out a delighted squeal before saying - “What is it?”

All three adults laughed. The box was ornate but looked functional, it reminded Will of his tool box or fishing tackle box. Mischa was at Abigail’s side then, helping remove the rest of the paper and open the lid. It opened up much like a tool box.

“It’s a jewelry making kit. Some of it might take time to learn how, but you will be able to make all sorts of things. I hope you don’t mind, I helped Hannibal choose.” Mischa smiled at Abigail, who was grinning back at the woman she had clearly come to adore over the course

of the evening. She unpacked something from the top - a simple friendship bracelet kit - "We can start with this. My papa gave me something similar when I was about your age."

Abigail beamed and took the box, clearly excited about making the bracelets with her new friend. "Maybe Hannibal can marry daddy and then he can be my papa." She smiled and said the words almost absentmindedly, not looking up from the kit box she was trying to open.

Mischa looked up at Hannibal and Will with a smile that indicated her heart had just melted into a puddle.

Will smiled despite the tightening of his chest and the burning of his cheeks. He wasn't sure he'd ever been this close to a panic attack before in his life. He wanted to make an excuse to leave the room for a moment get himself together but Hannibal took hold of his hand and squeezed it, his face showing his concern. He must have realised how freaked out Will might be at Abby's comment. He pulled Will over to the chaise under the window and sat him down, before moving over to one of the sideboards and turning on some classical music.

Will looked over and saw that the girls were immediately busy unpacking thread and beads and laying them out to make bracelets. Hannibal sat next to him, turning towards him.

"Will... please, children say-"

"I know, please don't worry. I guess it's sort of hilarious to think I am holding back in part to protect her should things not work out, but it seems like we're past that point." Will smiled and felt a weight lift with the admission.

Hannibal returned the smile. "I have to admit that I am glad of her support." the smile edged up into a grin and Will found himself leaning in to press his lips gently to Hannibal's for a brief moment.

They were smiling at each other as the drew back and Will relaxed against Hannibal. It was comfortable, it was nice. He looked over at Mischa playing with Abigail and realised he really did have to stop worrying so much. So what if it had only been a few weeks. Margot and Alana had got engaged after being together six months, they were married almost a year to the day later and that was almost ten years ago. And Hannibal wasn't Molly, and Will wasn't who had been back then.

He wasn't sure how long they sat like that, but Hannibal's hand snaked around and across his chest so that Will was rested back fully against Hannibal's chest. It was a comfort and closeness that he hadn't known in a long time and it felt so easy. He'd started to doze off when suddenly Abby was at his knee.

"Look daddy!" She was showing a bracelet around her wrist. It was made of several shades of red and green thread, with some white beads - one of which had the letter 'A'. "Mischa made it for me, I made her one but it isn't as good."

"It's great." Mischa laughed, holding up her arm from across the room.

Abby was grinning proudly. "Did you give Hannibal our present?"

Will was fully awake again now and sitting forward. He felt Hannibal shift and straighten up behind him and wondered if he'd been dozing too.

"No, it's in my jacket, you wanna-" he didn't finish as Abby ran from the room and back into the hallway. Will stretched and yawned and looked back at Hannibal who looked sort of dopey as though he had been sleeping too.

"You really didn't need to bring a gift Will, your company is enough." Hannibal murmured sleepily.

"Tell Abigail that, because she wouldn't listen to me." He grinned. Truthfully, he'd also made a gift for Hannibal, but as he didn't know what the plan with gifts was and he felt more self-conscious about it the more he thought of it, he decided to let it go unmentioned. He was actually relieved that Hannibal hadn't included a gift for him on that table.

Abby was back then, in front of them with the small wrapped gift. She held it out, presented it to Hannibal with a proud grin. "I made it. Daddy helped a little."

Hannibal's smile was wide as he took it and gently unwrapped it. The little deer didn't quite go with the tree he had in the dinning room, nor the trimmings in the study but even so he gave her a pleased look.

"Thank you Abby, this is very lovely of you. Such a thoughtful gift." He took her hand and kissed it, before getting up and heading to the mantelpiece. He moved aside some of the pine cones and other natural decorations and nestled the deer in amongst some of the ferns. "This forest was missing something, and I think she completes it nicely." He smiled down at Abby who looked all too pleased with herself, as though she had exactly made the gift for that reason alone - such was her foresight.

Will's face hurt from smiling. He let out a contented sigh.

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"Dammit. I should have checked the engine..." Will's voice was gruff as he tried to turn over the engine again and it spluttered. "It's this cold weather. I... Never mind. I'm an idiot. Can we come back inside whilst I call a cab?"

Will stood and shut the door, looking in the back at Abigail bundled up and already starting to nod off. It was already later than he had planned, but she'd been having such a great time with Mischa. And now the car was dead. They had to be over at the mommies' place by 11am. Maybe he could get them a cab home, then get one over to theirs. Pick up the car after the holidays - drop it at a garage for a service. His thoughts were interrupted-

"It's Christmas Eve Will, I don't think it will be easy to get a taxi, you might be waiting some time. I could... I could take you both home."

"I couldn't ask you to do that Hannibal." Will frowned.

"You're not, I'm offering. Actually, I'm insisting. Let me go get my coat and keys."

Will had the sense that there was no point in arguing so he just gave a smile and a curt nod. By the time Hannibal was back out with coat and driving gloves, Will had carried the now zonked Abigail from his car to Hannibal's, parked on the driveway.

Some shuffling later and all three of them were buckled up in the warmth of Hannibal's car and heading toward Wolf Trap. Will found himself dozing as they went, as hard as he tried to stay awake. The next thing he knew they were at his house and Hannibal had cut the engine.

"Will, I know you have to be at Margot and Alana's tomorrow... would you... I could come pick you up in the morning and take you? It would be no trouble, it might be difficult to get a taxi tomorrow, and-"

Will blinked away the sleep in his eyes and leaned across, pressing his lips to Hannibal's. He pulled back after a moment.

"Or you could stay the night?" Will smiled. "If you like? No funny business though, I have to be up early and Abigail sleeps in the next room." Will felt light and easy. He *had* been worrying too much. Sex or no sex he could have been enjoying himself more instead of working himself up into a state over how drawn he was to Hannibal. Sometimes these things happened. If it didn't work out he'd have to cross that bridge, but something deep inside told him that this was forever.

"That seems like a much better option." Hannibal smiled.

Will let the dogs out and then took Abby up to her room and shuffled her through getting changed and into bed. She didn't fully wake the whole time and it was deeply amusing.

By the time he got back downstairs, Hannibal had hung his coat and was looking through his bookshelf.

"Taking up fly fishing?" Will asked with a grin as he saw what section Hannibal was browsing.

"Perhaps if you teach me." His tone was as suggestive as his smile as he turned to Will.

Will returned the same smile before clearing his throat and dropping the smile. "Now, I told you no funny business!"

Will moved to the bureau and grabbed the whiskey and two glasses.

"A nightcap?" Hannibal was still smiling.

"As neither of us are going anywhere." Will poured out the drinks and handed one to Hannibal. He started towards the couch and then hesitated. "Look, I'm dog tired. If I sit on the couch I'll end up sleeping there. Shall we..." He didn't need to finish. Hannibal nodded and followed Will up to his room.

Whiskeys and bottle were placed on the bedside table as both men stripped to their underwear and got into bed. It felt strangely domestic, like something they had been doing for years. Will was only reminded that they hadn't been, when he was blasted with the sudden

memory of the last time they shared a bed - the size, shape and weight of Hannibal's cock. It was as beautiful as the man himself and he'd barely taken the time to savour it. He reminded himself there was no rush, that they could take this slow, even as his cock twitched.

Will settled against his pillows and handed Hannibal his whiskey.

They were two glasses a piece down and discussing Abigail's deer when Will poured out a third in the dim light of the side lamp.

"I..." Hannibal started and then paused, something self conscious about the way he played with his glass. "It was a very sweet gift." He cleared his throat. "I do have a gift for you, but... there didn't seem to be an appropriate moment."

Will let out a low chuckle, wondering if it was something sexual. His mind went to Hannibal giving him some comical underwear in front of Abby and Mischa. Unlikely, but it was clearly not a pair of socks. "That's ok. Maybe keep hold of it? Until the time is right?"

Hannibal hummed his agreement and went quiet, looking a little thoughtful.

There was a lull then as they both sipped and Will looked over Hannibal curiously. "Ok, truth or dare." He knew he was a little tipsy as the words came out of his mouth.

"Truth or dare?" Hannibal cocked his head.

"It's a game." Will was grinning.

"I understand the concept. I've never played. And you... want to play this now?" Hannibal was smiling too.

"Sure. I'm curious, there are things I want to ask." Will chuckled.

"You can ask anything Will, there doesn't need to be a game... unless you are curious about whether I might opt for a dare instead?" a grin tweaked Hannibal's lips. "Ok, as a truth."

Will nodded and smiled. "I... I guess I want to know how you feel about kids. I mean, Abby is part of the package - you already know that. But, I mean... in the future..."

"Ah." Hannibal grinned. "Our future fictional children." Hannibal chuckled. "I am not adverse. How do you feel about-"

"That's not how the game works-"

"Even so Will. You imagine having more children in the future?" Hannibal looked at him curiously.

"I guess I always..." he shrugged, "I always figured I would. Didn't have any specifics in mind, the who and how, but...maybe it comes from being an only child in a family that moved a lot. A sibling would have been nice." He caught the way Hannibal was looking at him - adoring him - and blushed. "Ok, you ask - I choose truth."

Hannibal grinned. "Not brave enough for a dare?"

"Not drunk enough. And believe me, I'd have to be extremely drunk considering Abigail is in the next room and these walls are practically paper." Will laughed.

"Hmm, well I admit I have been curious about something... and as the subject has in part been raised... Have you and Margot ever been intimate? It is just an idle curiosity..."

"Are you jealous." Will teased.

"Of her, yes." Hannibal grinned.

"Ha!" Will was grinning wide again. "No, never. I love her, and I met her when I was still dating mostly women, but no, we have never gone down that road. We met at our first job out of college, hit it off straight away and became buddies immediately. We roomed together for a while a couple of years later. Then I dated Alana - they got together. We were all friends. When they decided to have a kid they asked me first, wanted someone they knew and would be involved, rather than just a donor."

"Was it a difficult decision?" Hannibal was looking at him with deep curiosity.

Will shrugged. "Not really. I knew they'd be great mums, and I always assumed I'd have kids, though it was looking less likely. I mean... I didn't want to end up having kids in my 70s or something crazy like that. It... it felt right. And Abby, I mean... you've met her!" Will laughed. "I can't imagine my life without her. Without all of them, we're family."

Hannibal's smile was so warm he wanted to melt into it. There was a long moment of silence before Will cleared his throat, hoping both for and against a dare at the same time.

"Hmm, my turn again. I choose.... Truth." Hannibal's tone was teasing and Will felt like he was being baited. Did Hannibal want him to ask a dare on the next round? He wondered who would break first - he was certainly willing to play along.

"Best sexual experience of your life?" Will chuckled. He wasn't sure he expected Hannibal to answer but maybe he was a little curious about what he had to live up to.

Hannibal smiled and hummed thoughtfully. He took a long slow sip of his whiskey, eyeing Will over the glass, before lowering it and replying - "I believe it is yet to happen."

Will let out a groan. "Oh you sap." He laughed and nudged Hannibal playfully. As he leaned in Hannibal snaked his free hand up around the back of Will's neck and pulled them closer together until their lips met. Will reached his hand back and somehow managed to place his almost empty glass on the table before taking Hannibal's glass and doing the same. He leaned further in, following Hannibal down to the pillows.

He wasn't sure how long they kissed, deep and slow and full of longing, but at some point they had parted and fallen asleep snuggled against each other.

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

It's a Happy New Year for Will and Hannibal

Chapter Notes

Happy New Year everyone!

I'm working on chapter 9 right now (there will be 12 in total), but I have a busy time ahead and both me and my little one are sick right now so it might be slow going. However! Once these 12 chapters are posted I will be turning it into a non-linear series (mostly oneshots and short fics) for which I already have some stuff written, and will even be taking prompts for - so please do stay tuned, and subscribe to the series for when more goes up.

Christmas had been great. Getting ready in the morning with Hannibal and Abigail had not only felt nicely domestic but had not ruffled Abby in the least. She didn't even make mention of having Hannibal there, but maybe acceptance was gained by the amazing pancakes he made them.

After a morning walk together, Will shut in the dogs and Hannibal dropped them at Margot and Alana's place, where Christmas continued much as it usually did. Even so, there were stray looks from both Margot and Alana when Hannibal was mentioned - especially when mentioned by Abigail, who seemed almost as smitten as he was. As the evening progressed and Abigail was put to bed, the three of them shared a couple of bottles of wine whilst the mommies tried to get him to spill any and all information about things with Hannibal. Will laughed it off, even after a bleary eyed Margot loomed towards him with a mischievous look and reminded him that their reckoning was still on the horizon.

Abigail was with the mommies for a few days but they both had to work so he was having her back the day before New Year's Eve - Alana would pick her up after lunch on New Year's Eve. He didn't usually have plans for New Year and had offered to take her so the mommies could go out, but they insisted that they went out every year. It was his turn, he might want to do something with Hannibal.

It was the day after Christmas he next spoke to Hannibal over the phone to let him know-

“The mechanic is going to come out and tow my car, it’s easier. Then I can collect it once he’s got it running again.” Will explained. It really was easier, he still had paperwork he could do from home, he had Abby - Hannibal no doubt had work. It was best if the mechanic sorted things rather than Will going back out to Hannibal’s place, even if it was ridiculously tempting.

“Of course, whatever works best for you Will. Though I have to admit, it’s a shame we won’t get to see each other.”

Will pushed himself, knowing this was the perfect chance.

“Well, I... I guess I don’t have a date for New Year.” He chuckled lightly, glad that Hannibal couldn’t see the blush on his face. It was getting easier but Hannibal still made him blush without trying.

“Are you going somewhere that requires a date?” Hannibal asked - smooth, charming, amused. Will’s heart fluttered a little.

“Ah, no. I was planning on a quiet night in.” Will admitted. “I’m... I’m not one for big noisy crowds.”

“Yes, it is a busy time.” He could hear Hannibal’s smile.

“I uh, do you... uh.” It had seemed a straightforward thing to invite Hannibal over. It would have been if he hadn’t spent the last few hours thinking about how many invites Hannibal would have had from swanky people of note. Plus Mischa was still around so they might have plans too. “Do you have plans?”

“I have had several invitations, most are just polite inclusions. I have to admit, I have been a little remiss in replying to them. I should have responded by now, but then...” his words trailed off and Will winced, unsure of what was coming next but somehow nervous that it could be a preemptive rejection. Hannibal cleared his throat. “Then I met you and by the time I was required to reply, I was unsure whether to attend, or possibly with a plus one?”

“I... You mean, you want me to come with you to some swanky do?”

“If you would like.” A chuckle - no doubt at Will’s phrasing.

“Oh.” Will thought about it for a moment. He had nothing to wear to such a thing. He was not good with people. He would embarrass Hannibal. But that was Hannibal’s life and he wanted to be part of Hannibal’s life. “I, uh... I have Abby until lunchtime but after that...” He couldn’t hide the nervous timbre in his voice. He would go, he would try his best, and hope that he still had a boyfriend at the end of the evening.

Boyfriend? They hadn’t said it out loud and Will hadn’t even thought it before. But that was it wasn’t it? What else could he call the man he was falling in love with.

“Will.” Hannibal’s voice was gentle and calming. “A quiet night in would be lovely. Yours or mine?”

Will felt relief and guilt at the same time. “Hannibal, you can’t... you should go to one of your parties, I don’t mind.”

“If I thought you would come with me and enjoy yourself I wouldn’t hesitate. I would just like to spend the evening with you. Besides,” Hannibal crooned, “if I didn’t, who would I kiss at midnight?”

“You make a compelling point.” Will chuckled, his concern broken.

*

Will turned the gift over and over in his hand. He had been thinking about it all week, and the fact that he hadn’t given it to Hannibal. He’d been keeping it in his pocket, reaching for it and holding onto it when he thought about Hannibal. Which was a lot.

His thoughts swung wildly from excitement at seeing him again to trepidation about their future. Could he really be falling in love this quickly? Was it just because they were getting on so well? If anything he was glad they hadn’t been too physical yet, just enough to relieve that growing tension. He knew himself well enough to know that it would have only muddled the waters in his mind.

“Hannibal’s here!” Abby broke his thoughts as they returned from their walk gathering pine cones she wanted to make into hedgehogs for their next craft project. As they came closer to the house, they could see Hannibal’s car on the driveway. He was a little early, and even so Will didn’t care, his heart was racing already.

Hannibal sat, bundled up in his coat, on the chair on the porch.

“You could have gone in.” Will smiled. “The door’s open.”

“I didn’t want to trespass.” Hannibal rose fluidly from the chair and greeted them both at the top of the steps. Abby had reached her arms up and he automatically picked her up, taking note of the bag of pinecones. “Hello Abigail. You brought the woods back with you I see.”

“They’re pine cones, like the ones on your fireplace.” She told him proudly.

Will’s brow creased for a moment, though he continued to smile. Had Abby wanted to collect pine cones because she had seen them at Hannibal’s house? He knew she was fond of him, but...

The thought that had been pestering him for a while, but he’d ignored or dismissed, blossomed in his mind. It was too late - he realised. If they stopped seeing each other now Abigail would be upset, he had done a useless job at protecting her from this situation. So, maybe that meant he should let go. Both he and Abby were going to be hurt if this ended, so he might as well be resigned to that and relax. Just let this happen. He squeezed the gift in his pocket before releasing it and greeting Hannibal himself, leaning in to kiss his cheek.

Will opened the front door and Hannibal set Abby down once they were inside.

“Ok kid, go get your bag. Mama will be here any minute.”

“But I wanted to spend time with Hannibal.” she groaned and all but stomped a foot. Will gave her a stern look in response.

“Perhaps next week we can have a visit together?” Hannibal ventured, looking between Abby and Will. Will gave a soft smile and a nod.

“That would be nice.” Will agreed. “Maybe we can go out somewhere together.”

“Mommy says Hannibal is rich and goes to swanky places. Can we go to swanky places? What is swanky?” Abby chattered excitedly.

Will felt his face go red with embarrassment and he shot Hannibal an apologetic look, which was dismissed with a smile.

“I’m sure we can find somewhere swanky to go. A nice restaurant for lunch perhaps?” Hannibal offered.

Abby clapped her hands excitedly and hugged around Hannibal’s legs before racing off to her room just as Alana pulled up outside and honked her horn.

Will twitched the curtain and waved, Alana waved back and Will held up a finger to indicate Abby was on her way. Goodbyes were hurried then as Abby said goodbye to Will and Hannibal with hugs and promises that they would get together the following week. They watched from the porch as she jumped in the car, all waving as Alana pulled away.

“She’s a bundle of energy.” Hannibal smiled.

“Yeah, keeps me on my toes.” Will smiled then cleared his throat. “Look, what she said... Margot shouldn’t say these things around her, I’m sorry... I’ll...”

“Please Will, it’s of no concern.” He was grinning. “I’d like to take you both somewhere *swanky*. My treat.” He must have expected Will’s protest because he cut it off with “and Abby told me Christmas Eve about the wonderful Cajun food you cook for her. Perhaps you could do the same for me one night? I’d be very interested in learning from someone with experience, it’s not a cuisine I’ve attempted often.”

Will laughed. “I’ve eaten your frog’s legs. I’m sure there is nothing I could teach you.”

“I doubt that very much. I’m certain you have a great many things you could teach me.” Hannibal grinned.

Will’s own smile grew wider and he reached out, grabbing Hannibal’s coat and pulling him in for a kiss. It was slow and sweet, but he could feel the doctor’s restraint. It was barely the afternoon and they had all night. He wondered if Hannibal’s mind was also reeling through all the things they might do in that time.

When he pulled back they were caught in the warm fog of each other’s breath in the frozen air. Will laughed and lead the way back into the house.

Will had poured the wine and they settled onto the couch. Hannibal was telling him about Mischa's plans to see some old school friends that were in town for the holidays and attending a party. He thought it would be good for her to get out.

The whole time Will had smiled and nodded and listened, but he had been distracted. He had set down his wine and now his hand played over the gift in his pocket that he had made Hannibal.

"What is it Will? There's something on your mind." Hannibal looked concerned as he took hold of Will's free hand.

"I just... What Abigail said, what Margot said." He rolled his eyes and Hannibal chuckled. "I... I don't want money to be a problem. I mean, it isn't a problem for me. I'm trying for it not to be a problem for me." Will corrected with a smile. "You're nobility." Will laughed. "I just, I don't know what I can ever offer you. But... that doesn't mean I don't want to try."

Will pulled his hand out of his pocket, his fist clenched around the gift he had made.

"I should have given you this at Christmas, but it wasn't... I guess I wanted us to be alone, and I wanted to do it right. I..." he opened his palm and revealed the hand carved wooden heart. "I guess you have enough money to buy anything you want or need. I thought..."

"Oh, Will." Hannibal sighed the words and looked down at the heart Will was offering him.

"I... I can't think of anything more perfect. I..." He placed down his wine and stood suddenly. He went to the door, grabbing something from his coat hung there before returning to sit next to Will. Will watched him with curiosity.

"I told you I have a gift, but I wanted to wait until the time was right. I..." Hannibal seemed a little lost for words as he offered up a small box - a ring box. Will's breath hitched. He wasn't sure what was happening - part of him was eager to see inside and part of him was terrified.

He wanted to tell Hannibal to wait, to stop, because this was too much. Too soon. But, he realised, not unwelcome.

It's too soon! Not yet. Sometime.

Hannibal opened the box.

Will drew a breath and let it out with something like relief and smiled. It was empty.

"There... there is a ring." Hannibal was nervous, Will could see the tremor in his hands and clasped them with his own - swapping the heart for the empty box in the process. "I..."

Hannibal exhaled. He'd seen Hannibal cool and collected, seen him embarrassed and flustered from teasing, vulnerable from memories, but he had never seen Hannibal look nervous. Not like this. He now knew what Hannibal looked like when he was truly terrified.

"It's a gesture. A promise." Hannibal's voice was low, his eyes fixed on their joined hands. "I wanted my intentions to be clear. I know it's not the time yet, but... I needed you to know what I see for us in the future." He looked up, worried. "I... I hope you see the same thing."

Will's heart was racing. "You know I do." He breathed out the words. *You know I've fallen in love with you, don't you?*

Will wasn't sure who moved first but they were kissing, hungry and passionate. Will pulled back to take breath, it shuddered out. He was already hard before he saw the look in Hannibal's eyes, like the man wanted to devour him. He raised Hannibal's hands to his lips and kissed them before pulling away the heart and box and placing them on the coffee table.

"Hannibal I..." he swallowed thickly before leaning back in to kiss the man again. His now free hands moved over Hannibal, one up to the back of his neck as the other started at his knee and slid up to his crotch. He hesitated a moment before cupping Hannibal's hardness - groaning into the kiss at the memory of how it had felt in his hand the last time they were intimate. He wanted to feel it- "I need you Hannibal." He broke the kiss to say the words and look into Hannibal's eyes.

Despite the hunger there, they were also soft - loving. Will had never felt so adored in his life. In reply Hannibal grabbed his hips and pulled Will to straddle him, before drawing him back down into a kiss - nipping at Will's lips.

His mouth started to trail down Will's neck, ghosting over the skin and sending a shiver through Will, as his hands smoothed up Will's back under his shirt.

"I will give you anything you want Will. You can have everything of me." The words were breathed against his neck.

Will's hands framed Hannibal's face and pulled them back into another deep kiss as he pressed his hips forward, wanting nothing more than to magic away the clothes between them. He slipped his tongue against Hannibal's and groaned as the doctor's hands squeezed his hips hard enough to bruise.

"Oh, fuck." Will broke the kiss, aching. "Now, please..." He moved off and dragged them both to their feet, pulling Hannibal after him.

They only got to the bottom of the stairs before Hannibal pushed up behind him, pulling him back onto his hard cock and kissing the back of his neck. Will let out an involuntary chuckle. He turned in Hannibal's arms and let himself be pressed up against the wall as they shared another kiss.

"Am I allowed to touch you Will?" Hannibal asked, his lips moving to Will's lips again as he started to unbutton Will's shirt.

"Oh fuck, yes. Please!" Will was breathless as his own hands moved to Hannibal's belt and started to unbuckle it.

Will let his head fall back against the wall as Hannibal's mouth continued to heat the flesh of his neck and one hand slipped down, rubbing Will's hardness through his pants. Will felt like his legs might buckle even as he pressed his hips forward into Hannibal's hand.

"I want to touch you." Hannibal purred against his ear.

Will was biting down on his lower lip and nodding as Hannibal unzipped his jeans and slipped a hand inside. He closed his eyes at the touch as Hannibal took him in hand.

“I’ve wanted...all the more since you... since... You’re so beautiful.” He dropped to his knees and pulled Will’s jeans down. Will groaned again as Hannibal leaned in and nuzzled at his cock through his underwear. Will’s hands shot into Hannibal’s hair, gently gripping just to have something to hold onto.

He moaned as Hannibal’s tongue teased him through the soft cotton, his fingers tightening in Hannibal’s hair.

“Please...” Will moaned again, pushing Hannibal away and looking down at him - hair a mess as his hands slid out of them. “Upstairs!”

Hannibal stood and began unbuttoning his shirt as he nodded. Will pushed everything off his bottom half other than his underpants, leaving clothes and shoes in a pile. He began stripping out of his shirt as he started up the stairs. He got a few steps up before he heard Hannibal following, fast. He looked back and saw shirtless Hannibal chasing after him. He laughed and started to run, tackled once more as he got to the open door of his bedroom.

Hannibal started kissing him again, passionate - almost sloppy - kisses as they walked to the bed and he pushed Will down onto it. Will sat up and pulled his t-shirt off over his head as he watched Hannibal do the same. Then the doctor finished undoing his trousers and pulled everything off in one go, leaving him naked. Gloriously naked.

Will’s heart was thumping. He was so ready for this. More than ready.

Hannibal moved down and pulled off Will’s boxer shorts, he shifted slightly to aid the process - lifting his hips. He chuckled at the gasp that came from Hannibal as his raised cock was freed beneath him. Hannibal responded with a grin and a low growl as he descended and took Will into his mouth.

All laughter was gone as Hannibal’s mouth sucked him down, his tongue pressing firmly against Will’s cock, creating a tight seal that had his toes curling.

“Oh wow!” Will breathed out the words as a low groan, he felt like his bones were turning to liquid. Hannibal hummed as Will watched his head slowly bob, able to imagine every movement he felt his tongue and lips make. Another hum and Will’s entire body jerked in response, he was already so close to cumming he found himself tense up against the prospect. His refractory period wasn’t what it used to be and he wanted to make this last. He moved his hands into Hannibal’s hair and guided him back. “Wait.” he said softly.

Hannibal pulled back and looked at him curiously, wiping moisture from his chin.

“I.. I just...” Will started but he didn’t want to take the time for words when actions spoke louder. He rolled over to the bedside table and opened the drawer, pulling out a tube of lube and a box of condoms.

“Will...” Hannibal breathed out his name, his expression like someone who had been blessed. It made Will chuckle in a delighted way.

“I think we’re both done waiting, right?” He grinned as he propped himself on his elbow.

“Yes.” The word was rough, Hannibal’s accent thick. Will reached for the lube and Hannibal hurriedly grabbed up the condom box, opening it and shaking it.

And then peering inside.

And then ripping it apart.

“This is... there are no condoms.” Hannibal’s tone was flat as he looked up at Will. Will meanwhile was having his own issues. After managing to unstick all the gunge on the lid of the tube he tried to squeeze it.

And squeeze.

The contents were practically solid and not coming out.

He started laughing.

“Oh my god. Of course this is my life!” He couldn’t remember the last time he’d ever had anyone over to use this stuff. Years at best guess. He rarely brought people back to his place since Abby had been born. The lube was likely older than she was. “You can carbon date my sex life from this.” Will laughed, waving the lube at Hannibal.

After a moment Hannibal’s face broke into a smile too, which only made Will laugh harder.

“Oh, Hannibal. I’m fucking sorry.” He knew the words were barely audible through the laughter. He looked Hannibal over, naked he was beyond anything Will had imagined. The laughter died down to a chuckle. He moved off the bed and crouched next to the drawer. “There has to be more in here!”

He started to scramble through the drawer, but it was immediately clear that they were out of luck. Early evening on New Year’s Eve in the middle of nowhere.

Hannibal had scooted to the edge of the bed, and now ran his hand through Will’s hair as he rested his head on the drawer - somewhere between mirth and despair. Hannibal swung his legs around so that he was seated next to him.

“It’s alright Will.” His hand still played in Will’s hair.

Will looked up and smiled. “Sometimes, I’m not sure how I function as an actual human being.” He chuckled.

Hannibal grinned. “I would accuse you of teasing, only I can tell that is very much not the case.”

“No.” Will chuckled again and they looked at each other for a long moment before Will decided there was no way this was going to stop them being as intimate as they could be

under the circumstances. Hannibal's hand still in his hair, he edged forward on his knees until he was between Hannibal's thighs. He took in the view before him and let out a heavy sigh. "You've got such a great cock."

Hannibal chuckled at the compliment. He was cut off when Will's mouth lowered onto him. Will licked up the length, savouring the rich scent as he breathed in. Hannibal's hand tightened in his hair for a moment and then relaxed into a soft massaging motion. Will brought his hand up and slowly tunnelled Hannibal's cock, gently stroking and pulling back his foreskin further with each motion. "I love this." Will told him, nuzzling at the pulled back skin before taking Hannibal fully into his mouth.

Hannibal groaned and leaned back on his free hand, continuing to work his fingers gently in Will's hair.

Will savoured the precum on his tongue, breathed deep Hannibal's scent, suddenly unsure how or why the hell he had been putting off this intimacy. He wanted to devour the man.

He worked a hand around the base of Hannibal's cock rather than taking him deep, instead able to lavish attention on his glans, swirling with his tongue - alternating sucking and licking. When Hannibal's breath started to come in shorter, sharper, bursts he stepped up the pace, snaking his free hand from Hannibal's knee down to his own cock and pumping it in time.

When he felt Hannibal tensing, he removed his hand from Hannibal's shaft and took him into the back of his throat. Over and over, sucking him deep until his jaw was aching. He was already so close himself that he had to hold back. And then Hannibal groaned and tensed, drew up - hot cum spilling into Will's mouth. Will moaned again around Hannibal's cock and sucked him through the orgasm. He worked his own cock faster then until he was cumming over his hand and falling back away from Hannibal - onto his haunches - as Hannibal slipped from his mouth.

They were both catching their breath as Hannibal sat forward, his hand had slipped out of Will's hair as he had moved back, but now he moved to meet Will, taking hold of his soiled hand and raising it to his own lips. Heavy with a satisfied stupor, Will watched almost dreamily as Hannibal licked and kissed the cum from his hand, finally murmuring -

"Hmm, I think I would like to taste more of you tonight."

*

They lay in bed, kissing, touching, talking. Hands trailing over each other until they were both hard again. Will had chuckled at the delighted look on Hannibal's face when the doctor had clearly felt his hardness against his thigh. Hannibal had wasted no time in continuing the amazing blow job he had started earlier. Will wasn't sure of the last time he had cum so hard.

At some point they parted long enough to grab a snack from the kitchen. Will had manage to cobble together sandwiches from the dinner they had never gotten around to eating.

Will looked at the clock on the kitchen wall and laughed. When he got back to the bedroom laden with the tray of food he chuckled -

“its nearly 1am! So much for a quiet night.”

Hannibal was reclining against the pillows, the corner of the sheet draped over his middle. “yes... you are rather vocal.” he teased, sitting up to take a proffered plate. “Not that I don't enjoy that immensely.”

Will grinned as he sat on the bed and took his own plate. “I just think it's polite to make sure your enjoyment is clear. You wouldn't want me to come for dinner and not tell you how good it is would you?”

Hannibal quirked an eyebrow and grinned as he swallowed bite, “my dear Will, I'd be happy for you to cum anytime.”

Will rolled his eyes, gave Hannibal a gentle shove and then leaned in for a peck on the lips.

“I guess we missed our kiss at midnight.”

Hannibal smirked - “I'm pretty sure I was kissing you at midnight.” they shared another warm laugh.

As they finished up their sandwiches Hannibal asked - “do you make New Year resolutions, Will?”

Will shook his head. “Not usually, though I probably should. First being, always check you have lube and condoms before inviting your boyfriend over.” he chuckled.

Hannibal gave a lopsided smile. “Boyfriend?”

A few days ago Will might have balked, got tongue tied and flustered, but not tonight. Instead he laughed “That better be the case given tonight's activities!” No trace of nervousness or hesitation. If their gift exchange hadn't made their feelings for each other clear, then the 5 orgasms between them surely had.

Hannibal just continued with the dopey grin as he pulled Will in for a kiss.

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

After the high of New Year an ex-patient of Hannibal's stirs up trouble

Chapter Notes

This is the promised angst chapter that had to happen. You're all going to hate me. Sorry! There will be a happy ending I promise!

Apologies that I'm not able to update this as often as I was - I'm now back at work and have several WIPs (including currently unposted ones), but I am hoping to wrap this one up in the next month or so.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It was late by the time Will stirred. His head was comfortably nestled on Hannibal's chest, and Hannibal's fingers were playing gently in his curls. The heat of their entwined naked bodies keeping them warm.

He took a deep breath and let it out as a steady sigh. He could wake like this everyday. More than happily. The way it felt so natural to be in a domestic setting with Hannibal was nice. He'd tried to ignore it every time they'd been at each other's houses, but there was no ignoring it after their night together. *Time to just go with it, Graham!*

He was exhausted but satisfied. It had been so intense how they had worked each other with hands and mouths that Will was almost glad they hadn't had more options. His brain might have melted. One thing was already clear - Hannibal was the best lover he'd ever had. Maybe it spoke of how well they worked together as a couple. He wasn't going to question it.

"Good morning beautiful." Hannibal murmured.

Will moved so that he could look at Hannibal, unable to stop the spread of his grin as he took in the messy hair and sleepy smile.

"Hey." Will sighed again and closed his eyes as Hannibal's hand continued to play in his hair. "that feels pretty good y'know. Keep it up and I might never let you leave this bed."

"Sounds perfectly fine to me."

Will chuckled. "That said, I'm also not adverse to one or both of us venturing out to find a drugstore open today." he moved up and began to nuzzle at Hannibal's neck.

"That sounds even better." Hannibal sighed, running his hand down Will's back and giving his bare ass a squeeze. Will pressed against him in response.

With a groan of displeasure, Will pulled back. "I really need to feed the dogs and let them out before they start to think I've forgotten they exist."

Hannibal nodded and gave an appreciative smile as he watched Will slip naked from the bed and pull on his discarded boxer shorts. Hannibal followed suit a moment later.

"I'm going to use the bathroom. Can you bring my phone back with you from my jacket pocket? We can at least stay warm under the covers whilst we locate an open store."

"Good thinking doctor." Will smiled and kissed the corner of Hannibal's mouth before pulling on his t-shirt and heading downstairs. He fussed over the dogs for a few minutes before feeding them and letting them out.

When he grabbed Hannibal's phone from his jacket, he must have hit a button because it lit up. The screen saver was a picture of the deer on the mantelpiece, which made Will smile. There was also a message notification.

As he travelled back up he gathered the rest of their clothes - abandoned in the passion of the previous evening. He reached the top of the stairs with his hands full.

"Hannibal?"

"I'll be out shortly." Hannibal's voice came from the bathroom along with the sound of running water.

"Okay." Will acknowledged. "I grabbed your phone. You have a message."

It sounded now like Hannibal was swilling his mouth before he replied. "It might be Mischa. She took a taxi last night. Better check she isn't stranded somewhere. Can you read it to me Will?" The water stopped and Will could hear a towel being pulled off the rack.

"Sure." Will swiped the screen and stared at the message for a moment. Reading it in his head a couple of times to see if it made any sense.

- I still can't believe we couldn't spend last night together. I missed not kissing you at midnight. I will have to be satisfied with the memory of Christmas Day until I see you again. Wednesday at my place?

Will blinked. Read it again.

"Is it Mischa?" Hannibal asked. "Will?" The bathroom door opened and Hannibal emerged from the steam with a towel around his waist.

"Who is Francis?" Will asked.

All traces of a smile disappeared as Hannibal's face paled.

*

They sat on the bed and Hannibal took his hands. He had read the message himself - face grim - before asking Will to sit so they could talk.

Will had a sinking feeling in his gut. He wanted to pull away, an unconscious act of self-preservation, but he stopped himself. He had jumped to conclusions once before - about Mischa - and been embarrassingly wrong. He needed to let Hannibal explain everything.

"I understand your concern, but I have never given you reason to doubt me, have I?" Hannibal asked, his expression almost unreadable but there was definitely worry there.

Will shook his head. He hadn't. But Will had to wonder why he had never mentioned someone in his life that would send such a message.

"Hannibal, I trust you." He meant it. "But I don't trust myself. You might have noticed I'm maybe a little insecure. I need you to be upfront with me. Even if you think it's something I'm don't want to hear. Or something silly or insignificant."

And he had no idea what that might be. He knew Hannibal wasn't - couldn't - be seeing someone else. But he needed to hear it from Hannibal.

"So, who is Francis?" Will asked again.

There was a moment of silence and a sigh from Hannibal as he was clearly trying to work out how to explain. It was doing nothing to help Will feel okay about the situation.

"Hannibal?" Will pressed, annoyed.

"He was a patient." Hannibal finally started, looking away and frowning. "He became fixated with me, it can happen with some personality types - hazard of the profession. I referred him onto another psychiatrist."

"And Christmas?" Will was almost afraid to ask.

"He continues to be an avid fan." Hannibal said dryly, letting out a heavy sigh. "After I returned from dropping you off on Christmas Day he was at my house. He had talked his way in - Mischa could tell that he was a troubled individual, and felt it best left to me. When I arrived I took control of the situation. Eventually he left and I informed his therapist. At the time I did not feel it warranted any further action."

"And now?" Will asked, the text running over and over in his mind.

"I will speak to Doctor du Maurier again, perhaps she needs to adjust his medication." Hannibal replied, thoughtfully.

"That's it?" Will frowned, getting more than slightly pissed about the whole situation. "That's all you're going to do?"

“What else would you suggest?” Hannibal returned the frown now.

“Call the police? Make a report or something? The guy is clearly a wacko. Hannibal - that text, if he thinks there is something between you don’t you think you should do more to discourage it? What if he’s dangerous?”

“A dangerous wacko. Yes, I suppose he could be.” Will heard genuine anger in Hannibal’s voice for the first time and knew immediately he had caused it. “In my line of work I deal with many *wackos* Will. Should I make police reports on them all, just in case?”

“You know that’s not what I meant.” Will snapped back. “I can’t believe you’re being such a jerk about this. Don’t you think you should... I mean, what if you had gone home Christmas Day and he had hurt Mischa?” Will knew how frustrated he sounded and did nothing to curb it.

They had drawn back from each other now, bodies turned to each other and angry frowns set on both faces.

“If I had thought for one minute he was dangerous I would have called the police then and there.” Hannibal rumbled angrily.

“And it would have already been too late.” Will threw his arms up with exasperation and rose from the bed. He grabbed a pair of jeans from the dresser and pulled them on.

“You would have me be clairvoyant then?” Hannibal’s voice rose a little as he did. He seemed to take a cue from Will and pulled on his underwear beneath the towel before letting it drop.

“Ugh!” Will grunted his frustration and shook his head. “I’m just suggesting that perhaps you could be more careful? I mean... Hannibal, if he’d arrived the day before I would have been there. Abigail would have been there. Do you understand that? Can you so safely say that he isn’t dangerous that you would have been happy for that situation to arise?”

Hannibal’s frown relaxed and he paused as he was pulling on his shirt. “You’re... asking me to be more careful because of you and Abigail.” It was spoken as a realisation.

“Of course I am! Look, maybe he isn’t dangerous. All I’m saying is he clearly is not ok if he’s randomly turning up at your home and thinks you’re, what? His boyfriend? That could spell all kind of trouble and that is not trouble I am happy to put Abigail in the path of.” Will’s tone softened a little, but it remained firm.

He sighed and let his shoulders drop, trying to find the right words. He closed the few steps around the bed to Hannibal and took his hands.

“Hannibal, here’s the thing. I have a family. If we’re going to be together then you have a family too, okay? If you’re going to be in our lives then Abigail has to come first for you. We’re a package deal, and I know that might be scary - a big commitment. But that’s how it is. So you need to let me know now if that doesn’t work for you.” Will’s heart was thumping. He knew what Hannibal was going to say, even if fear was telling him something else.

“If... If he had come over when Abigail was there I would have called the police.” Hannibal squeezed his hands. “I understand, I’m sorry Will. I will contact the police about Francis and in the future I will be more careful.” he sighed, releasing whatever had been pent up. He pulled Will to him, into an embrace. “Whatever I have to do for my family.”

“Well.” Will found himself smiling at the words. “That’s ok then.” He buried his face in Hannibal’s neck and took a deep breath, relaxing into the hands now running up and down his back. “Do you think we did ok?”

“Hmm?”

“In our first fight. I think we did ok.” Will smirked against Hannibal’s skin as Hannibal chuckled in response.

*

The fight weighed heavy with them the rest of the day. They were tentative and neither wanted to make the first move. Will wondered at going from a searing need to be with Hannibal the night before, back to wanting to slow things down. They had resolved the issue, Hannibal had called them a family, and yet there was still something stuck in Will’s craw over the whole thing. The fact was he'd do anything to keep his daughter safe, and that included ending things with Hannibal if he had to. He just hoped it wouldn't come to that.

He wasn’t sure if Hannibal felt the same way or was just humouring Will as he let him reset the pace again. Even their kiss goodbye was on the chaste side. And yet Will couldn’t find it in him to kick himself over it. He wasn't stupid, he knew what this was - self preservation. Detaching before he got hurt.

The weekend after New Year, Hannibal took him and Abigail for dinner somewhere *swanky*. Abigail loved it - she had got dressed up in a party dress for the occasion, and had acted as somewhat of a buffer between him and Hannibal. There were no sleepover plans arranged and they went their separate ways at the end of the night with no discussion on the matter.

Their phone calls became less frequent until Will was actually surprised Hannibal suddenly called him at bedtime on the Monday night. The conversation was stilted and forced on both sides and it made Will’s heart ache. It ended with Hannibal asking Will to meet him at his office the following night so they could go get coffee once the last patient had gone - to talk.

And here it comes. Will thought. Too big a commitment, too big a life change for the doctor now that reality had hit.

Even so, he agreed. There weren’t any other options really. Things were clearly not working out and Hannibal was just the first of them to voice it.

Will didn’t get much sleep that night.

The next day he felt like he was in a trance as he taught class. He cancelled his office hours for the day, it felt fairer to the students to do that. And yet towards the end of the day he found himself busy with mundane tasks - filing, preparing slides for the following lesson,

xeroxing some notes. All things that he didn't need to do right then, but that he suddenly felt the compulsion to undertake despite the fact that he was already cutting it fine if he wanted to get to Hannibal's office for 6.30 as they had planned.

Knowing he was already late and certainly doing nothing to delay the inevitable, Will arrived at Hannibal's office on edge. He had never been there before, but he wasn't surprised at how up market it was. Abigail would have laughed at how swanky it was. Shame she would never see it for herself.

He took a deep breath and resolved himself before making his way to the front door. He rang the bell for Hannibal's office - there appeared to be several other offices in the building - and waited for a response.

He hoped this would be straightforward. A clean break, dealt with as adults. Self-preservation mode was switched on. The same response that had killed any chances at a relationship since he and Molly split. And yet, it hit him hard - he'd thought he and Hannibal had been passed that. He started to feel confused about what he wanted, how he should handle this. Should they try and make it work?

"Hey! You." The words came from behind him, slightly off like they were spoken with a speech impediment. "Are you here to see Doctor Lecter?"

Will turned and could make out the man in the darkening street. He was tall shadow moving closer. The street light illuminated him for a moment - harelip and a dangerous glint in his eyes that sent a shiver through Will.

"Can I help you?" Will asked, wanting to interact as little as he possibly could.

"Are you the guy he's been seeing? I know all about you. Sneaking around, like I wouldn't find out." The words were snarled out.

Will felt panic rising even as he drew himself up and prepared to meet the guy who was now striding towards him. He was tall, and although his clothes hid it enough, Will could tell from the way he held himself rigid, that he was a muscular man.

He was fast too. Before Will could move he was on him, shoving him hard down to the ground. Will felt and heard at least one rib crack as it hit the step up into the offices, such was the force. He grunted and grit his teeth and tried to brace himself for more. He could see the man's fists raised above his head ready to rain down.

Will wasn't defenseless or easily intimidated - but caught off guard and essentially trapped against the building and now with an injury, he started to really feel scared. He raised his own arms up to protect himself, wincing at the pain as he did so.

And then the door opened.

Will felt relief wash over him and he slumped a little.

“Will?” Hannibal was standing over him, but must have understood the situation immediately as he stepped over him and towards his attacker. “Francis, what are you doing?” His voice was calm, professionally detached, Will reasoned. “This is a very bad thing you have done. I need to call the police.”

“Hannibal... no, I... I’m sorry. He...” The man’s speech impediment was suddenly very clear, as was his fear. Not at the threat of the police, no. It seemed more like he was scared he had disappointed Hannibal and lost favour in some way. Understandable, considering he believed them to be a couple.

“You know I have to Francis.” A placating but firm tone.

“Don’t do this Hannibal. Don’t do this to us. I know you love me.” The man’s voice was desperate and Will couldn’t see Hannibal’s reaction. “Not that... odd looking...”

At some point he had closed his eyes against the pain. Perhaps Hannibal shook his head, perhaps there was a look of disgust. Will was unsure. But then there was an anguished cry and then the sound of quick and heavy footfalls. Will flinched for a moment until he realised they were heading away.

He flinched again at the hand at his cheek.

“Are you alright Will?” He opened his eyes to Hannibal’s concerned face. Will nodded and Hannibal took out his phone and dialled 911.

The pain was searing, the step still digging into the injury it had made. Will started to drift on his thoughts as he closed his eyes again and listened to Hannibal requesting police and an ambulance. He wanted to protest - he just wanted to go home - but he had no energy to do so.

Will thought back to the other two occasions in his life where he had been attacked as a result of sexual preferences. The first had been in college, Will and a couple of friends leaving a gay bar near campus - attacked by some assholes. He’d ended up with a black eye and bruised ribs. Jimmy, the skinny little shit that he was back then turned out to be pretty scrappy but his knuckles were shredded as a result of him fighting back. Between them all they were many kinds of beat, none of them quite bad enough to go to the hospital, which suited them all just fine.

The second time had been when Abby was a baby. He’d been seeing this guy a few weeks and had decided it was time he met Abigail. They’d taken her to a petting zoo, not that she could appreciate it much more than to smile and drool at the animals at that age, but it was a nice sort of family date thing to do. Until they got jumped in the parking lot by some concerned dad who had strong opinions about two guys being at a family friendly place. Matthew had pretty much shit himself and bolted, leaving Will to get slammed up against the back of the car. The guy headbutted him, leaving him dazed and pretty terrified. And then Abby had started screaming in her carseat and that made the guy back off, muttering that faggots shouldn’t be allowed to raise kids. Will had collected himself together, got in the car and driven to Margot and Alana’s without even a backward glance for Matt. Once he got there he had pulled onto the drive, killed the engine and then sat with his head in his hands, crying for what seemed like hours - before Margot came out to see what was going on.

Hannibal's hand was on his cheek again and Will flinched away, his eyes snapping open once more.

"Don't" He found himself saying firmly and meaning it. In that moment he really didn't want Hannibal to touch him.

Rationally, logically, he knew Hannibal wasn't to blame for the man's actions. But even so, Will had asked him - pretty much pleaded - for him to deal with this situation before something crazy happened. At least he hadn't had Abby with him.

"Will..." Hannibal sounded pained and Will forced himself not to care.

The ambulance arrived a minute before the police car. Will let them patch him up and take him away whilst Hannibal was still giving his statement.

*

He'd broken two ribs, had some minimal internal bleeding. That had been bad enough. What had been worse was having Margot and Alana arrive at his hospital bed anxious and terrified. He'd tried to reassure them that he was fine, but they both knew better than that.

"And Hannibal? He's ok?" Margot had asked. She'd made a weird scrunchy face when Will had shrugged, not pleased with the response.

"He was inside, he didn't get hurt." Will was glad of it, even if his tone was less than enthused.

"That's good. You want us to call him?" Alana asked gently, placing a comforting hand on his knee.

He shook his head. "No, I don't... It's not a good idea. I don't want to see him right now. I don't want..." Will huffed out a frustrated sigh and pinched the bridge of his nose in an attempt to hold back tears. "I told him something bad would happen, he should have... I mean, if he fucking gave a shit about me and Abby he would have called the fucking police before. Got a restraining order or something!" anger fuelled the words and he knew a restraining order wouldn't have really made a difference to the situation.

Both women were silent for a moment and then Margot pulled him into a hug that made him cry out in pain.

"Will. He loves you. You have to be blind to see that he wasn't completely and madly in love with you from the day you met. He's just... for a smart person he's just really dumb. Give him a chance to-"

Will pulled back and winced. "I'm-"

Will was cut off by his phone ringing, Alana picked it up from the side table and handed it to him whilst shooting Margot a meaningful look. It had been Hannibal. Will hung up on him.

Margot sighed.

Will couldn't believe it was already mid January. New Year seemed so distant, almost unreal. But if time wanted to speed up Will wasn't going to argue. He wanted winter to be over - the cold seeping into his bones every time he left the house. His ribs ached.

Margot issued another sigh now as they walked in the woods, the dogs running ahead. He'd been home a few days and felt like he'd been physically and emotionally trampled.

"You need to stop coming and checking on me. I'm fine. Healing nicely." Will told her anyway.

"I'm not worried about your ribs Will. You know that." She clearly bit back another sigh.

"Stop Margot. Please." He loved her, but it was already hard enough.

He thought he had something special with Hannibal. He thought there was a future there. But breaking a couple of ribs had put pay to that. Maybe if he didn't have a family to think about he could be more forgiving. But he did have a family.

He whistled for the dogs and turned, starting back towards the house.

"Have you talked to Hannibal at all? Has he called."

Will let out an irritated sigh and shot her a look so she would know he wasn't going to answer. The man had been about to break up with him when this all happened, he was sure, so what did it matter.

Hannibal had actually tried to call him. A lot. Several times over the first couple of days. Followed by texts asking him to answer, asking him to talk. Since then there had been at least one call an evening, around the time they would normally have talked before all this happened. Before New Year. And each call came with a stab of hurt. It hurt not to answer. It hurt to think of Hannibal. It all just hurt.

Will considered turning the damn phone off, but couldn't as it was his contact with the mommies. He considered buying a new phone but decided that was an overreaction at this stage. Surely Hannibal would stop once he got the message. How many times could he call and not get an answer before he'd finally let it go?

Will wasn't sure he was going to get that answer today, as he and Margot came back into view of the house and could see a car on the drive.

Will didn't recognise it, but he recognised Mischa Lecter as she got out of the car at their approach.

"Will. I... I wanted to see how you are." She smiled gently.

Will didn't say anything for a moment, just kept walking until he and Margot were next to the car.

"I've been better." He finally replied in a surly tone that he knew she didn't deserve. Even so she nodded comfortingly before turning to Margot.

“Hi, I’m Mischa. Hannibal’s sister.” She held out a hand.

Margot took it and shook it enthusiastically, a grin growing on her face. “The infamous Mischa. Abigail is a big fan. I’m her mom, Margot - so glad to finally meet you.”

“Oh!” Mischa’s smile was wide. “Abigail is such a lovely child. She’s a real credit to you!”

“Thanks, that’s sweet of you. Though you clearly haven’t seen her on her bad days.” Margot laughed.

The laughter broke something in Will.

“Is there something you wanted Mischa?” Will all but snapped.

“Will!” Margot’s shock was clear. With good reason, he knew. He was a surly shit and often rude, but snapping at someone like this wasn’t him. Maybe it was the pain. Maybe Hannibal brought out the worst in him?

“It’s alright. I understand. It’s... a lot has happened.” She turned from Margot to Will. “I’m sorry you were injured Will. So is Hannibal. Would you talk to him? Just so he knows you’re ok? I’m not going to force you, or ask you to see if you can work this out together. I just... he’s my brother and he’s hurting too. Can you at least talk? He didn’t ask me to come if that’s what you think. He doesn’t know I’m here. I just... I’m worried about you, both of you.”

The look on her face was so pained and desperate that Will felt a stab of hurt at the thought he was in part responsible for her feeling that way.

“I... Ok Mischa. I’ll try.” Was all Will could manage.

*

Will crawled into bed. It was still early but he was exhausted, especially since classes had started back up again. Jack - his boss - had told him he could take some leave until his ribs were better, but Will declined. He wanted to be busy. He needed it.

He was just starting to nod off when the phone rang. It was Hannibal.

Will took a deep breath. He grabbed the phone from the bedside and held it for a while, just looking at the name flashing on the screen. He had to answer it. He had to get this over and done with. He pressed to connect the call.

“Hi Hannibal.”

“Will. I... thank you for picking up.” There was a lull for a moment before Hannibal asked. “How are you?” hesitating over the obvious words.

“I don’t really know how to answer that.” Will’s reply was immediate and honest.

Another silence. And it seemed to speak volumes. They had gone from being able to talk about anything and everything to unable to converse at all. Well, he wasn’t sure he had

anything to say. Maybe Hannibal didn't either. Except then Hannibal said -

"I miss you, Will."

He felt his heart lurch for a moment and his stomach with it.

"I..." the words were there and he knew he had to say them. "I'm sorry Hannibal. I can't do this. You were about to break up with me when this... you can't do this. You can't say you miss me when-"

"Will... please. I wasn't going to break-" Hurried and anguished. It hurt Will to his core, but that didn't seem to matter any more. He cut the man off before he could continue -

"It's been what weeks? A handful of months since we met? This moved too fast and was too much. We obviously handle things differently, we aren't as compatible as it seemed." Will was just reeling through the words he'd had in his head since the incident. "We barely know each other Hannibal. That's what all this brings home - We really don't actually know each other all that well at all."

"Please..." the word sounded like more than a plea, like raw emotion. Will clenched his jaw.

"I can't do this Hannibal. Please just... please stop calling me."

He ended the call and curled into the blankets, his whole body shuddering with hurt as he cried.

Chapter End Notes

Edit to add: I'm sorry that Will is coming across as repetitive or unrealistic or if readers think he's just looking for reasons to push Hannibal away. None of this is my intent.

As a parent I've been trying to write this from the pov of someone who is wary after failed relationships in the past and now has a child to consider when trying to develop a romantic relationship. It looks like I've missed the mark.

I had already started writing chapter 10 as Hannibal's pov but I'm not sure when I'll get to finishing it as I'm pretty unsure right now about how to proceed given that it seems to have been taken in a way I hadn't intended. I'm sorry if readers are disappointed. I do appreciate your support.

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Hannibal starts to understand things from Will's perspective and the Mommies recruit Mischa in their plotting.

Chapter Notes

Thanks so much everyone for the support. I haven't had chance to reply to comments yet, but I will get to it, so a mass thank you for now. I was a little put off by comments that people thought Will was overreacting, as I worried I hadn't conveyed his position well enough. As I said I will get to comments, but for now just to say - as a parent I would react the same way as Will. Others might not. I'm sorry if that makes him seem unrealistic or annoying to some readers, but I have to stay true to the story I'm telling. I know they have gone a bit OOC from the show, which is the hazard of writing an AU, so I do apologise for that.

After I posted the last chapter I was actually really down. I had been prepared to deal with people being upset by there being angst, but I wasn't prepared for the reaction to Will's decisions. I thought that I got it all wrong and that people thought I was doing a bad job with this fic. That evening I not only didn't want to write Cookies anymore, I didn't want to write anything again ever. Until a few hours later when I realised the best thing to do was to actually just put aside my other WIPs for a couple of days and get this next chapter out so that you could all see where this is going and not hang with angst too long. So. Here is the next chapter.

When Hannibal had opened his front door those many weeks ago, he had not been expecting his future to be on the other side. But, he considered, that had been the case.

After a few minutes conversation he'd become more intrigued and amused by Will Graham than he had been by anyone in a very long time.

Mischa told him he was too picky, and he had wondered up until then that she might be right. But when he met Will and Abby he knew that it hadn't been that he was picky - just that he hadn't known really what he had been looking for. It hadn't occurred to him that his perfect partner would one day grace his doorstep rather than being found at the opera or a society function, or perhaps a lecture or conference. Places where one would not find Will Graham - down to earth, surly, smart, witty... a trove of characteristics that Hannibal had no idea he

would be attracted to. Much less that in the right proportion and combination, they would be the man he quickly knew he wanted to spend the rest of his life with.

Every time they spoke, every time they spent time together, Hannibal was seized by a sense of wonder. How could he ever hope to keep such a flighty creature. Between his anxiety and his dedication to his family, Will was not easily courted, Hannibal realised. So he was gentle and open and patient.

They had come so far. Will had allowed him into his life and Hannibal had never been happier. He couldn't remember a time when he felt more complete. He patted the ring box in his pocket. Now was the time, he'd realised, for a promise at least. For a declaration of his intent in a way that Will could never misunderstand.

He thought of the ring itself, sat safely in his dresser. One day, whenever the time was right, he would put it on Will's finger and their joined future would truly begin.

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"I can't do this Hannibal. Please just... please stop calling me."

Hannibal wasn't sure what hurt more, the fact that Will then ended the call or the anguish in his voice before he had done so.

Hannibal felt numb. He looked at the phone in his hand before placing it in front of him on the desk. He felt dazed. He had been in limbo since New Year and now, finally a resolution. Albeit not one he had wished for or expected.

Everything had been fine before New Year, before Will had seen the text from Francis.

And then they had fought and Hannibal could understand Will's concerns, but this wasn't the first time he had issues with a patient and needed to refer them on. It probably wouldn't be the last. He did as Will asked and filed a police report about Christmas Day nonetheless.

Did it matter? Yes, because he had been fooling himself thinking that everything was fine before New Year. That was part of the problem wasn't it? Fine would have been him discussing with Will what had happened with Francis, letting Will know what was going on before Christmas, and certainly after Christmas Day. Instead he hadn't thought about it. That was the issue wasn't it? That was what Will meant – if they were a family he had to share all these things no matter how insignificant they might seem. Because someday they might become significant and then it might be too late. Hannibal had hoped it wasn't too late for them.

Even so, he had backed off then, it felt like they both needed some space, and the truth was *he* needed it. He was committed to Will, and to Abigail, but Will was right – he really needed to consider what that meant.

He didn't have any reservations at all, he knew he wanted them to both be a part of his life and future, he just had to work out how to integrate them better than he had been. Did he need to rethink his career path? Did he just need to be more cautious with patients? Either

way, there was a lot of consideration needed – how far would he go to change his life to incorporate them?

All the way, he realised. Whatever was needed.

And as soon as he had made that realisation, he had asked Will to meet him for coffee.

How different things might have been had Francis not shown up – almost as though Will had predicted it.

Hannibal had wanted to apologise, to let Will know he had reported Francis, and would do whatever was necessary to safeguard Abigail. He would do whatever he had to for them to be a family. And then he had missed that chance.

The police had arrested Francis at his home later that night, and his prior report meant that he was able to expedite the process for a restraining order. Not that it would have done much good on the night – if he was happy to beat a man, Francis would surely have had no compunction about breaking a restraining order.

He wanted to talk to Will. To make sure he was ok, and for them to work through this, if there was any chance they could.

If they could talk, he could ask Will what he could have done differently so he knew for the future. He wasn't used to having to think of others in this way. Not since he and Mischa were younger, but he had been a child himself then, it wasn't the same thing. His thoughts kept returning to what Will said about Abigail – what if she had been at either incident. He was sure Francis would never have intentionally hurt a child, but how could he know what might have happened. He wouldn't have thought the man would have attacked Will, but that was clearly not the case.

And now it felt like everything within him was shattering. He couldn't blame Will for his reaction. He had trusted Hannibal with the story of his previous marriage, he had let him into his family and made him welcome almost as soon as they had met, he had given his heart – they both had. And Hannibal had repaid that by being careless with it.

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“Please Hannibal!” The voice was firm enough to shake him from the daze.

“Sorry?” He looked up at Mischa across the breakfast bar.

“Please eat something. You can’t...” she sighed. “You’re really worrying me. I know you’re hurting. I...” She turned away and Hannibal felt his heart clench.

He tightened his jaw, angry at himself. When they were children food had often been scarce, they had both spent enough for a several lifetimes worrying about the other eating. He didn’t need to put her through that.

He inclined his head as an apology, not wanting to say anything that would stir up more memories than were likely swimming around her head. He picked up a slice of toast from the rack and ate it slowly.

He hadn't eaten properly in days. Not since his last call with Will. In fact, he wasn't entirely sure if he had eaten at all. He was thankful the weekend approached, because he had already had to cancel most of his appointments through an inability to focus on his patients.

"You could go to his house? Or talk to Margot? I met her, she seems nice - approachable. She gave me her number if you want me to call her?" Hannibal caught Mischa's words and was sure he had zoned out through some of the conversations.

He shook his head. "Please don't Mischa."

"I... Hanni I know you want to. You can't give up. You won't, I know you won't. So what are you waiting for?" Her voice was raised and one of her hands had balled to a fist next to her coffee mug.

He considered her words for a moment. There were really only two options - give up, or not. He didn't want to give up, he thought they had something that was worth one more try at least. But he also knew that Will probably needed time. There was anger there, and Hannibal understood that. He just wasn't sure how long it would take for the anger to subside, because he was sure until then Will wouldn't be interested in anything he had to say. Will Graham had learned self preservation the hard way and it would take some time for the automatic reaction to the situation to abate.

"I'm waiting for Will." He replied softly. "I'm going to wait until he is ready to hear me, no matter how long that takes."

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"This has gone on long enough. I'm not an impatient woman, I can keep my cool. But this is... Tell me Hannibal, do you really understand what happened?"

"I... think I do." With Margot stood in his office, all but tapping her foot like an impatient parent, he felt suddenly very small.

"Let me tell you something. As Will's friend, as Abigail's mother - you fucked up. That is my view on it. Because there is something you have to realise... there really can't be any compromise here. Do you understand that?" her tone wasn't aggressive, more disappointed and disapproving.

Hannibal nodded. "Yes I..."

"I want you to say it Hannibal, because I need to know, before anything else, that you get it." She was pointing a stern finger at him.

Hannibal swallowed. Were all mother's this intimidating?

He had been surprised when she turned up at his office. He'd found her sitting in the waiting room at the end of his last session for the day, her hands folded in her lap and a cold gaze on him. She was already in through the door before he barely had time to invite her.

"Say it Hannibal!" she damn well commanded.

"I... There is no compromise. Where Abigail is concerned, it's Will's way or nothing at all." His words were ardent.

She grinned and gave a curt nod. "Well ok then. Because, you've really been stupid. For a clever man, you are pretty dumb. I told Will as much." She had circled his desk and dropped into his chair. She leaned forward, steepling her fingers before she continued. "Here's the thing... and I know you know this, but it bears repeating - Will is a package deal. You get Abigail and you get a side helping of me and Alana. Much to your consternation I'm sure."

She was still grinning at him but he was too overwhelmed by her presence to react in any way other than stare at her blankly.

"Family." She made a motion with her hands as though to encircle them all together. "And family comes first. I know you have patients that you have to have a professional concern for, well..." she wiped her hands as though dusting off dirt "they come second. Not even a close second. Because, I know you love Will. I knew you loved him when you were at Abby's party and had barely known him five minutes. And that isn't a lot of time to adjust. Well, neither is nine months and that's all the time we had. So if you love Will and you want in on this family, then I want you to repeat to yourself every damn day - no compromise." she was jabbing a finger in the air again. "Will says you can or can't do something for Abigail's sake, there's no negotiation - that is that."

She sat back in the chair, steepling her fingers again and looking at him over them. "Ok. Any questions?"

He knew the answer. He thought he knew the answer, had known it for some time but it had never been voiced. But he had to ask anyway - wanting to know this extraordinary woman's take on it.

"Is Will... in love with me?" It came out more tentatively than he had expected.

She rolled her eyes as though it was the most obvious thing in the world. Perhaps it was, it had seemed like it so many times.

"Will loves you, he's in love with you. He's just terrified of dealing with the consequences of that. And you didn't make it any easier by being a dumbass. How is he going to get up the nerve to be in love with you if you fuck up?"

Hannibal couldn't help but let out a chuckle. It felt like he hadn't laughed in years. It pulled at something inside him. He missed laughing as much as he had since he met Will.

"Ok. That's out of the way. Now we can get down to it." She pulled her shoulders up straight and looked like she meant business.

“With what?” Hannibal asked, wondering how he’d even got this far without questioning her presence.

“Getting you idiots back together.”

*

Hannibal was sure he had never stepped into a Chuck E Cheese before in his entire life. It was loud, garish, horrifying on some levels, and yet he found himself hoping he would have reason to visit such an establishment many times in the future.

Margot waved over at him and he made his way to the table where sat Margot, Alana and a smug looking Mischa. He cocked a brow but clearly should have realised.

It was almost a week since Will had hung up on him, but it felt much longer. In fact everything before New Year was starting to feel a lifetime ago.

“You three look like you are plotting something.” He observed of their smiles.

“Already plotted actually.” Alana smiled over her coffee mug and Hannibal slide into the booth next to Margot and opposite Mischa. The vinyl made him cringe a little and he was starting to wish he'd brought the hand sanitiser from the car. Another thing he had to learn to live with - children were messy. He made a mental note to buy an apron for Abigail - perhaps they could at least try and confine some of the mess to the kitchen, though he knew that was unlikely. And... that was fine. This is something Will had never said explicitly, just assumed Hannibal would understand - and now he did. Children were life changing, he was ready for that now.

“And what have you plotted?” He asked, unsure he wanted to know from their shared grin. He looked around for Abigail but couldn’t see her in the Saturday afternoon throngs. “Where is Abigail?”

“She’s on her way. With Will.” Alana seemed to be their spokesperson, her grin was behind her coffee mug again.

Hannibal had a sinking feeling. “Does Will know I will be here?”

Alana shook her head. He looked across to Margot and then back to Alana and Mischa, their expressions a mixture of amusement and concern. Mischa’s half smile turned to a frown and she reached over and grabbed his hand.

“Hannibal, please don’t worry. Who knows him better than Margot and Alana? This will be fine.” She gave a comforting smile, but didn’t miss the look the mommies shared.

“Fine... maybe.” Margot added. “Look. Let’s face it, Will isn’t going to be happy about this, but he doesn’t have a choice. So... We’re getting him here, we’re making him stay and then the rest is up to you Doctor.”

Hannibal took in a deep breath. He didn’t know what he had expected from today, he had an inkling that Will might be there, but for the most part he only knew he was meeting Alana

and Margot to talk things over - plot, as they said. He was suddenly nervous. He was sure Will wouldn't cause a scene in a public place, but he couldn't imagine the man's reaction to seeing him there would be positive. Maybe this was a terrible idea.

"I don't-" his would be objections were cut short by an excited shout -

"Hannibal!" Abigail's voice carried across the room only a moment before the girl herself. She hurried to Hannibal and threw herself into him, caught in a hug. "I missed you. Daddy said you we might see you anymore. That made me sad." She clutched to him tightly and he closed his eyes for a moment. He was suddenly hit by how much he had missed her. He hadn't let it creep in before, the loss of Will had been enough, he couldn't think about Abigail. He squeezed her back.

He opened his eyes and immediately saw that Will was stood just inside the door, watching with an unreadable expression. Will looked away, looked down, visibly took a shudderingly deep breath and then stiffly made his way to the table, favouring his ribs which clearly pained him.

With every step Hannibal's heart thudded almost painfully against his chest.

"Abby honey, go play a while." Margot extricated her from Hannibal and she stood next to the booth for a moment looking at them all. "The grown ups need to talk."

Abigail pouted but then ran off to the soft play, leaving as Will arrived. Will didn't look at him but Hannibal couldn't drag his eyes away from the face he had missed so much.

Margot poked him to get his attention and he realised the ladies were all getting up from the booth. He stood to let Margot out and then remained standing, awkwardly.

"What the hell Margot?" Will said in a low voice.

"Ok. Here's the thing Will..." She turned and looked at Hannibal and pointed for him to sit back down, Hannibal obliged, not feeling there was any other recourse. She looked back at Will and took one of his hands in hers. "So, you remember when you really fucked up and had us scared witless because we couldn't get hold of you all night?" Will's colour rose. "Yeah, so you'll remember that not everyone is perfect and everyone makes mistakes and loving someone means working through those?" Will didn't react. "You'll also remember that you owe us and I told you we would get payback one day? Well, consider this a reckoning Will Graham. You stay here, talk to Hannibal for a minimum of thirty minutes and we're even. Whatever the outcome... but just... talk. Give each other a chance and if you still decide to end it, well... that's for you to decide."

He could see the muscle in Will's jaw flexing and unflexing under light stubble, but he still didn't say anything, just continued to look at Margot. Resigned almost. It certainly didn't seem like Margot was going to let him out of it.

"Come on Abby. Time to go." Margot called and then turned. All three women, Abby running to catch up with a wave back to Hannibal and Will, started for the door.

“You’re leaving?” Will finally spoke, hard words and a glare for Margot.

She smiled back at them. “I think you’re both old enough to work this out on your own.”

A minute later and they were gone, both Hannibal and Will watched them go.

“You don’t have to do this Will. But, I-” Hannibal started, but was silenced by the cold look Will turned on him. He took a deep breath. “I can go. It doesn’t break your promise to Margot if I leave.” Still nothing but cold silence, but Will was no longer looking at him and he wasn’t sure if that was better or worse. “I... I didn’t know, that they planned this. I should have guessed, I’m-”

“Stop talking Hannibal.” Will’s words were hard but even so he slide into the booth opposite. He sighed and slumped a little, looking down at his hands.

Hannibal watched Will watch his hands, but remained silent as requested. Happily in fact. If the last few days had taught him anything it was that he was willing to do anything, whatever he had to. For the family he hoped would be his.

“I... missed you.” Will all but whispered and didn’t look up. Hannibal stopped breathing and Will cleared his throat and finally looked up. He looked sad, pained. “But... that isn’t enough. You know that right?”

Hannibal took the question as a cue that he could talk. “I understand. I do Will. I... I’m sorry about everything. I know that might not be enough. But I’d like to explain if you’ll let me?”

There was a pause and Hannibal was worried that he wouldn’t, but then Will nodded for him to continue.

“I admit, I didn’t understand at first. I have to handle difficult patients - it comes with the job - and I’ve never had to consider before how that might impact on other people in my life. I need you to know that I had filed a police report, I did take you seriously... and I shouldn’t have backed off as I did after New Year, but it left me with a lot to consider.” Will’s expression creased briefly into a frown. “Not whether I was ready for the commitment and responsibility of a family, but how. How to take that on.” He took the chance and reached over to take hold of Will’s hands, when he didn’t pull away Hannibal’s breath hitched. “Will, tell me what you need me to do for us to be a family and I will do it... If that’s what you want? I can... I will find a different job, close my practice - there are always consultant positions, something further removed from patients...”

Will sighed and shook his head, but squeezed Hannibal’s hands. “You can’t do that... You don’t need to. I just... if we... I just...” he sighed again and Hannibal understood - he didn’t want to confirm anything, Will clearly was still undecided, hesitant, and Hannibal could understand that completely. “I just need you to be more considerate. I know... Look, I don’t blame you for what happened with Francis, you didn’t know that he would take it that far, you aren’t responsible for his actions, but neither of us were prepared. You because you hadn’t considered the consequences, and me because you hadn’t talked to me. And I mean, before... Hannibal, if you had told me about him before Christmas then I would have known. Do you understand? If you had shared that information you would also have shared the

responsibility. I would have been prepared. I mean..." he looked at Hannibal and his lips quirked into a small smile. "I'm not saying we wouldn't have come over Christmas Eve, I just might have brought pepper spray with me. Do you get it?"

Hannibal nodded. "I do. Will, I... You're right, I hadn't thought about it before. But I do understand and, from here on, I will tell you everything. No matter how small or insignificant, because I do understand that being with you means having a family and I have to protect that." He stopped himself and swallowed, his skin tingling with nerves. "If that's what you want? If you want to... I know you said that maybe this means we don't know each other well, but I disagree. No one has ever known me, seen me, as you do and the thought of losing that terrifies me. But if it's over it's over. And I will respect that."

They both fell silent as they watched each other. Noise seemed to fill the air around them - excited children and the artificial melody of electronic games that seemed to have evaporated whilst they had talked but now flooded in.

Will took in a deep, long breath and let it out slowly. "I want... I want, in future, for you to tell me even the little things so that we can work it out together. And... I want for us to get out of here."

Hannibal's breath quickened and the relief was palpable. He nodded and tried to not let his smile get the better of him. "I don't think our thirty minutes are up and I'm sure the harpies will have found some way to monitor us."

"Are you kidding? Margot probably bribed one of the staff." He chuckled and looked around, clearly trying to ascertain which one was their monitor. When he looked back across the table he leaned over and pressed a soft kiss to Hannibal's lips. For a moment Hannibal thought he might combust with the feelings he was trying to keep under control. Will sat back with a slight wince, a hand on his ribs, and grinned at him "That should give them something to report back."

Hannibal chuckled, holding back the sob that came with it. He had been terrified he'd never see this side of Will again. "If you think we can leave perhaps you'll me take you to lunch?" Hannibal asked.

Will gave a lopsided smile and cocked his head. "That sounds... I guess, I'd rather be somewhere more private."

"Of course." Hannibal nodded. "We can continue to talk somewhere we can hear ourselves think."

"Or... you could take me home."

Will's gentle smile and bright eyes made Hannibal's breath hitch again.

Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

"I've missed you." Hannibal breathed out the words and looked down. "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry..."

Will shushed him and smiled. "Please. We both need to put this in the past if we're going to move on. We just need to learn from it."

"I need to learn from it." Hannibal sighed and nodded.

Will chuckled and cupped Hannibal's cheek, lifting his face until their eyes met. "We both need to adjust... but yeah, maybe you more than me." He grinned and his heart thud heavily at the thought of Abigail calling Hannibal 'papa'.

They pulled onto the drive as a taxi started its engine out the front of the house.

"That's Mischa!" Will could see her sat in the back of the cab and she turned and waved as it drove away.

Hannibal frowned and took out his phone as soon as he killed the engine. He looked like he was about to call her but he paused and his frown deepened. He read something and then passed the phone to Will.

-Thanks for the hospitality Hanni. Being here has made me realise how much I've missed having family around. I'm heading back to L.A. to make sure the company's ticking over and then I'm going to look into some property here. Don't worry I'll check into a hotel once I'm back - the last thing I want is to intrude on the love nest! ;)

Will saw that she had sent it over half an hour earlier, maybe when she was waiting for the cab. He was about to hand the phone back when it buzzed and a new message dropped into the conversation feed -

-Yay! I saw you drive up with Will! I knew you'd work it out. You better not fuck this up Hannibanana! <3

Will laughed and handed the phone back.

The sadness on Hannibal's face - no doubt at seeing his sister leave, if only temporarily - eased. On reading the second message his expression moved through amusement to embarrassment and Will chuckled.

He grinned at Hannibal. "Looks like we have the place to ourselves."

There was a moment of silence after the levity that flooded Will with uncertainty. Finally Hannibal turned to him with his usual unreadable expression and asked -

"So where do we go from here? If you want for us to be over this?" He then added quickly as clarification - "I do too, I want us to get back to how things were at New Year, but... is that something we can do? Are you really going to be alright with that?"

Will frowned and was a little hurt, but he understood. He may have come here with Hannibal after the mommies brought them together, but Hannibal knew him to be quick to call time. It wasn't as if this was the first thing that had almost put an end to their relationship, even if this one was totally valid. But now that he did genuinely have good reason to end it, to say that Hannibal's behaviour was not ok and for the good of Abby and himself it would not work, he found he didn't want to. He silently thanked the mommies for their part in bringing them back together.

"I am." He said with conviction. "Maybe if you hadn't realised the problem and promised to act differently in the future I wouldn't be. But I trust you... I..." he looked at Hannibal and knew what he was about to say to be true - "I know how much you care about Abby and me, and I know you would never let us get hurt. If you know that something could hurt us, I trust you to understand that now and to act accordingly. I'm right to trust you aren't I?"

Hannibal sighed the word "yes" with what appeared to be relief, and his face broke into a smile. Will returned the smile and leaned over to draw Hannibal into a kiss.

He had wondered if it might be awkward between them, so when Hannibal responded to his kiss he let his own relief wash over him. He happily let Hannibal pull him into a tighter embrace despite the angle he was having to sit at in the car seat paining his ribs. They were both breathless by the time they pulled apart.

"I've missed you." Hannibal breathed out the words and looked down. "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry..."

Will shushed him and smiled. "Please. We both need to put this in the past if we're going to move on. We just need to learn from it.

"I need to learn from it." Hannibal sighed and nodded.

Will chuckled and cupped Hannibal's cheek, lifting his face until their eyes met. "We both need to adjust... but yeah, maybe you more than me." He grinned and his heart thud heavily at the thought of Abigail calling Hannibal 'papa'.

They were really doing this, this was really happening. They had a future laid out before them - conjoined. He could easily imagine a time not far off when they would begin to blur and his past and future would be defined as before Hannibal and after. For the first time in his life he welcomed that, wanted it more than he could say. He couldn't even begin to be annoyed that Margot and Alana had meddled. As per usual, they had seen what was best for him and pushed him towards it. This time he wasn't going to fight that.

"I need you to know that I heard you Will, I understood you and I will do everything I can to be the person I have to be for both you and Abigail. I wish I could turn back time and-"

Will cut him off with another kiss, deep and slow before pushing him back and looking at him, taking in the remorse and determination, and the love. All that love in his eyes that Will knew was for him, it practically burned into him.

"I love you." The words fell from Will's mouth before he had chance to even consider them, driven wholly by emotion. He was breathing heavily, suddenly nervous at his own admission. When Hannibal didn't reply - only stared and blinked - he found himself trying to fill the only awkward silence there had ever been between them. "I mean... I'm in love with you Hannibal... and I need us to be over this because I want to spend the rest of my life with you."

Hannibal let out a shaky breath and did not stop staring. Just as Will was starting to ratchet up the anxiety levels, Hannibal sighed – "Will, I..." he seemed to be searching for the words that Will knew couldn't be rejection and yet he of course feared. In his life he'd only told one other person, Molly, that he loved them and that had been a huge mistake that had cost them both valuable years.

"I..." Hannibal started again before he shook his head and chuckled. "I had been hoping for a more romantic setting than my car when I confessed my love to you."

Will let out a heavy sigh of relief and then joined Hannibal's smile - "technically you still haven't confessed to anything, so..."

Hannibal laughed and pulled Will close again, he opened his mouth to speak but was immediately cut off by Will's cry as pain exploded in his ribs. He helped settle Will back in the seat and they both chuckled again, though Will's was slightly less easy.

"Maybe we should get you somewhere more comfortable." Hannibal told him, and Will couldn't agree more.

*

Despite the kiss in the car and Will's subsequent confession, they were clearly both still cautious about the whole thing. Or maybe Hannibal was thrown, he probably had this all planned out in his head and Will had rejigged it. He should probably get used to that.

Hannibal lead the way into the kitchen and wordlessly started the coffee brewing. He seemed to be looking around here and there and Will wondered if he were looking for signs that Mischa would be back as she had promised.

This had been a really long and weird day and it was barely mid-afternoon.

"Would you like some wine?" Hannibal asked, turning to him and looking about as nervous as Will had ever seen him.

“We’re not having coffee?” Will grinned and pointed at the pot.

“Oh. Yes, of course.” Hannibal muttered and took two mugs from the cupboard. He seemed almost in a daze when he set them down.

“Is everything okay?” Will asked, a little concern starting to edge into his amusement.

“I just... I...” He turned to Will again and his face was pale. “The conversation in the car, I wasn’t expecting it... I wasn’t expecting... Will I...” he let out a shaky sigh. “I thought it would take more for you to tell me that you love me.”

Will let out a bark of laughter before stifling it down to a chuckle. “Oh my god, Hannibal. How long have you had this planned in your head?” He shook his head and his grin hurt. “I can just imagine it, whisking me off for a candlelit dinner, or maybe a romantic picnic. Everything just so? And then you tell me you love me and I fall into your arms and say the same? Or did you imagine I would say ‘I know’, or ‘ditto’?”

When Hannibal didn’t share his laugh, in fact he looked as close to sulking as a grown man could get, Will’s face softened and he pulled Hannibal to him, ignoring the twinge in his side.

“I had no choice in saying it. And I don’t even care if you never say it. Hold it back out of spite if you like. I already know you’re in love with me.” He was grinning as he took Hannibal’s mouth in a deep and hungry kiss. He didn’t realise he had backed Hannibal against the counter until they met resistance and he felt Hannibal’s arousal hard against his own.

The coffee machine let out a beep that it was done and they broke apart to observe it. Will chuckled again but Hannibal looked at him with all seriousness.

“Will... I wanted to bring you here because I needed to... I couldn't not spend time with you. We don't have to-”

Will stopped his words with another kiss, as hard as before and even hungrier. He sighed when Hannibal moaned into his lips and melted against him.

In a replay of New Year their progress to the stairs and up to the bedroom was only stalled by the removal of their clothes, piece by piece, until they were in Hannibal’s bedroom in nothing but underwear.

“Please, dear lord, tell me you have lube and condoms.” Will tried to joke, but now aching in both his chest and groin he might just die a little inside if they weren’t able to fully consummate their relationship in the extremely near future.

“Yes.” Hannibal was breathless as they broke apart and he went to the bedside drawer.

Will stripped out of his boxers and moved behind Hannibal, pressing close against him as he retrieved the items. Hannibal straightened and dropped them on the bed as Will started to kiss

along his neck and shoulders whilst his hands eased down the waistband of his underwear until they fell to the floor.

*

The feel of Will against him made Hannibal shudder. The idea of taking Will inside him wasn't something new to him, it was on occasion something that consumed him. Since the first time he had taken Will into his mouth he had known that he needed to feel that hardness fill him.

But it wasn't something they had previously discussed. On the occasions they might have they had been too occupied with giving each other pleasure.

"Will... I... How do you want to... um, how do you want me?" Hannibal shuddered out the words as his heart raced uncontrollably. He knew Will, pressed against his back, could feel it as his hands snaked up and fingers spread into his chest hair - fingers tweaking a nipple and drawing a hiss from him.

"Hmm?" Will hummed against the flesh of his shoulder between open mouthed kisses along his skin.

"We never... talked about..." Hannibal started, cut off each time by a jolt of pleasure radiating from Will's fingers or mouth. He wanted to ask bluntly for Will to fuck him, but the words stuck in his throat. He didn't want to draw out the hesitant and embarrassed Will, when this Will was already ringing the pleasure from him.

"Talked?" Will questioned between more kisses, one hand grazing down Hannibal's belly and falling lightly to his cock, stroking it slowly. Hannibal groaned and let his head fall back onto Will's shoulder.

"About... preferences... I... I want... do you want..." Will must have understood in that moment because he paused and Hannibal could practically hear his brain whirring.

Will let out a shaky breath against his shoulder. "You mean whether I prefer to..." his words trailed into a swallow and Hannibal cringed, waiting for Will to back off, to hesitate and stumble. Despite how far they had come physically, he had always feared that one of the reasons Will held back was because it was too overwhelming. He should have said nothing and let the situation unfold.

"It's ok, we don't-"

Hannibal was cut off as Will growled his answer against the side of his throat - "Hannibal I've never wanted to fuck anyone more than I want to fuck you right now."

His sigh was more shudder and he moaned at the words. Will chuckled then and pulled back, turning Hannibal in his arms. There was a confidence in Will's expression that Hannibal had rarely glimpsed and it filled him with happiness.

“Generally, I really don’t mind either way, Hannibal.” Will’s voice was rough with emotion and lust and the sound of it vibrated through Hannibal’s bones. “But right now...” he kissed down Hannibal’s neck, hand running lightly down his back and then squeezing an ass cheek. “The things you do to me...”

Hannibal could hardly stop himself panting as his breath constantly caught in his throat and the thud of his heart seemed to come in irregular and heavy beats.

They were kissing again before he knew it and he was immediately caught up in his own passion, backing Will towards the bed as the man chuckled into the kiss. When they got to the bed, they pulled apart and with a grin, Will tried to near wrestle him down. Hannibal found himself resisting for the fun of it, feeling an elation he rarely did when it made Will grin even wider until pain must have sparked through him again..

Hannibal helped him gently down to the bed and then they were kissing again, mouths too busy for hands to even attempt anything other than clutching at each other. The need to catch their breath pulled them apart again. Will grimaced and rolled away from Hannibal in pain but determined, making Hannibal frown and then laugh as Will picked up the tube of lubricant that had apparently been sticking into his back. They laughed together before Will’s died to a soft smile and he gently pulled Hannibal towards him, and then all but whispered -

“Lay on your front for me?”

Hannibal nodded and felt his skin prickle as he obliged - easing forward and bunching a pillow in his arms, keeping his hips raised.

“Oh god.” Will groaned, and his hands smoothed along Hannibal’s back and over his rump. “I just.. I just can’t believe... I honestly started to think we’d never get here.”

Hannibal understood but anticipation kept him from doing more but moaning his response. Will’s hand was gone again then and he heard the cap of the lube and the slick sounds of it being applied to fingers and warmed. His breath was shaking and his heart beating as the anticipation reached near fever pitch.

And then Will’s hand was on him and he groaned as he pushed back on the fingers circling his hole, spreading lube and teasing him. After a minute that felt like the longest of his life, he was about to beg for Will to push into him but the fingers slid to his cheek. He felt himself being parted by Will’s hands a moment before his tongue swiped over him and his whole body shook. It took all his strength to hold himself as still as possible, while every muscle screamed at him as they tensed with the pleasure. It had been a long time since anyone had done this to him and the feeling was better than he remembered. He groaned into his arms as Will’s tongue went from lapping at him, to swirling over and around.

Then Will’s slicked fingers were back, moving instead of and sometimes alongside his tongue until Will started to push into him and open him up. With Hannibal already so relaxed into the sensations, one finger quickly became two. As Will stretched him he slipped his tongue inside as and when he could.

Hannibal could feel the sweat prickling along his skin and pooling at the base of his arched back. He felt it trickle as he shifted and the sweat ran over his skin. He tried to hold still, but his efforts were in vain as he first surged forward and then pushed back as Will added a third finger. Perhaps he was growing impatient, or could sense that Hannibal was, because Will drew back and his tongue was gone, and instead his fingers were working him open in gentle earnest.

Hannibal panted and groaned at the sensation of the stretch and burn, crying out every time Will near grazed his prostate. A ghost of a touch that was enough to send pleasure coursing through him. His cock was heavy and leaking between his legs and he didn't dare put a single finger on it.

Time seemed to lose all meaning as a fourth finger joined and Hannibal's anticipation became almost unbearable. He was close to begging Will to take him, when the fingers were suddenly withdrawn and he could hear the impatient rip of the condom packet and the shake and squeeze, the slick wet noises of the lube, as Will prepared himself. Hannibal squeezed his eyes tight shut and groaned as Will's cock pressed against him.

A soothing hand rubbed at the base of his back and he relaxed as much as he could to allow Will in. The push was slow and deep and they both groaned into it. Will moved gently at first, savouring, tentative.

"Please Will..." Hannibal finally begged and Will began to thrust deeper and harder until Hannibal was completely breathless and almost writhing.

Will was panting heavily as he slowed to a stop, breathing out the words - "I want to see you, Hannibal. I need to see you..." He withdrew slowly, causing Hannibal to wince and shudder. He drew back onto his knees, feeling open and empty. When Will's hand touched to his shoulder to guide him round, and no doubt onto his back, Hannibal took hold of it and kissed it. Tugging on it so that Will was pulled forward and he could push the man down in front of him.

There was a sharp intake of breath from Will, clearly the movement had pained him. But as soon as Will was on his back he grinned up with the certainty of what was to come.

Hannibal moved over Will, taking hold of his cock to guide it back within him as he straddled him. The look on Will's face as he closed his eyes and his mouth dropped open, was pure bliss. Will had moved a hand to his ribs but he appeared to be in very little pain. Hannibal felt an ache in his chest at being able to make Will feel better.

Despite the ache in his legs from his previous tensing, Hannibal leaned forward over Will, and began to move, careful to avoid any motion that would jar Will's ribs. Clenching as he drew off each time, working Will's cock inside him without the man beneath him having to thrust at all. He began to ride him hard, loving the sounds and expressions that each movement brought out in Will. He felt Will tensing and so changed his angle, finding his own pleasure as he continued to bring Will to his.

"Ohmm, uhnnn... Hannibal..." Will's hands grabbed at his hips and Hannibal felt short nails dig into him. He took one off and guided it to his own cock, and then Will was stroking him -

an irregular rhythm as he was losing himself, but enough with the other stimulation he was receiving.

Hannibal moved for his own end then, knowing Will's was building and would continue to mount. He felt his own orgasm pooling within him, he refined his angle, and then took Will's lips. The press of them together resulted in his cock being trapped between them with Will's hand squeezing tight around it. And that was it.

The sensation ripped through him and he came so hard he had to grip his hands on Will's shoulders to stop himself toppling. He cried out and groaned as he rode Will through his own orgasm and into Will's as profanities laced with endearments spilled from Will along with his seed.

They rocked together for a few long moments before Hannibal finally collapsed on top of Will, sweat and cum slick between them.

*

In truth Will had been a little thrown by Hannibal asking if he wanted to top him. He had never assumed anything between them and was open to all and anything with this man. In the past he'd considered himself versatile and his preference often just depended on his mood and partner. But with one night stands he'd had now and then, he somehow was assumed to be exclusively a bottom but he had never made an issue with it.

And despite being pretty surprised with how everything went down the previous evening, he really did want to be inside Hannibal. He had never wanted anything more, and so there was no way he could even hesitate. He had told Hannibal he loved him, and somehow that made all the difference. It broke down that last barrier between them - there was no longer a reason to take things slow and even less reason for him to hold back or in any way restrict his passion. In fact, he'd sort of enjoyed the surprised expression on Hannibal's face - he clearly hadn't expected Will to be so forthright, but he was well past being coy when he knew exactly what he wanted.

He had been a little surprised himself when Hannibal had taken control of the situation, and had no desire to deny him. Given that they had both waited this long it really shouldn't have been a surprise that Hannibal had been equally unable to hold back. And Will couldn't even pretend not to have enjoyed it or been thankful for a less painful position on his ribs.

The rest of the evening had been spent reacquainting themselves with gentle touches and soft sighs. At some point, that Will was sure must have been passed midnight, they ended up in the kitchen where they prepared a snack together. They were both naked until Hannibal donned a waist tied apron to make them what passed for eggs and bacon in Hannibal's kitchen. Will smirked at the sight of Hannibal's ass on display as he turned to crack the eggs. He couldn't resist running a hand over the muscular rump. He knew Hannibal liked to swim and that was all the more evident in his legs and ass. He seriously appreciated it!

Hannibal hummed his pleasure at the touch and smiled over his shoulder - "that isn't on the menu right now."

Will let out a bark of laughter and shook his head. It felt so good to be doing this. Together.

If not for the jolt of pain through his ribs when he laughed, he could almost forget that they had been derailed for a while. He pushed the thought down and concentrated on trying to playfully distract Hannibal with nipping and sucking kisses at his neck.

After eating they went back to bed, cuddling together and talking until it they drifted off to sleep.

Hours later, Hannibal was still asleep when Will woke. He looked so peaceful and content it almost hurt. The deep and contented sigh Will breathed in and out made his ribs ache. He snuck out to the bathroom and back and Hannibal was still asleep. Will didn't know whether to snuggle back up or sit and watch him for a while, it all just felt so surreal. But so good.

In the end he got back into the bed and spooned against Hannibal, sighing into his warm skin.

Less than an hour later Will was awake again and Hannibal was gone. He was just about to get out of bed when the door opened and Hannibal came in with a tray of freshly squeezed juice and pastries.

Will laughed as he placed the tray on the side table and handed Will a glass. "Damn, this is better than the nicest room service I've ever had."

Hannibal smirked in return and settled back on the bed, his robe falling open to show he was naked beneath. And damn, if there wasn't one thing Will would change about that.

Will gulped back the juice and set the glass down on the tray, his eyes not leaving Hannibal the whole time, which made the man's smile grow all the while.

"What is it Will?" Hannibal finally asked with a grin.

"I was just remembering last night." Will answered, reaching forward and gently tugging at the tie on Hannibal's robe.

"Oh?" Hannibal set his own glass down. "And your remembering requires my nudity?"

"Requires? I was going to say no... but now I think about it..." Will tugged lightly again and the tie came loose and pulled away. Despite having made the first move, he was surprised when Hannibal suddenly surged across the bed and pushed him back. They both went down with Hannibal atop him. He grimaced at the pain through his ribs and Hannibal looked concerned until Will smiled again. That seemed to ease him though his touch became more tentative.

Will chuckled as Hannibal began to suck kisses into his neck, pressing against him so that Will was in no doubt how aroused Hannibal was. It mirrored his own and he wondered if they would ever leave this room again. Had Hannibal not brought breakfast they might never eat again.

"Are we making up for lost time, Will?" Hannibal breathed against his skin and Will felt any laughter he might have had swallowed by the emotion in Hannibal's voice. "Or are we

starting as we mean to go on?” He trailed kisses along Will’s jaw. “Because I want to do this every day for the rest of my life.”

Will let out a shaky breath and Hannibal nudged his legs apart, settling between them with their cocks pressed together.

“I want us to spend the rest of our lives making love to each other. Tell me you want that too, Will?” Hannibal’s voice was thick with emotion and want. It set Will’s heart racing, the words giving him goosebumps.

“You know I do.” Will managed on a shaking breath before the air was stolen from his lungs completely as Hannibal’s hand tentatively reached between them, stroking over his cock and balls before lightly over his hole.

“Is this ok?” Hannibal asked, pressing kisses down Will’s neck.

Will swallowed and managed to nod before saying - “Please.”

Hannibal’s hand and teeth teased at him for a moment before he drew back, sitting on his haunches and shrugging out of his robe before reaching over and grabbing the lube and a condom from the nightstand. Will closed his eyes, listening to Hannibal moving, feeling the bed dip and bounce as he did. Anticipation crawling over him. As much as he had wanted to be inside Hannibal the night before, he wanted this. The tremor in Hannibal’s voice had been enough. He needed no more than that to want this.

His breath hitched again as lubed fingers were pressed to him. He let his legs fall open wider and welcomed Hannibal as the circling and teasing finger pushed into him. Already this felt different than it ever had before. Somehow more intimate, but also so full of gentle tenderness it made him ache.

With previous lovers, preparation had been a means to an end. The necessary bit before sex that, whilst it could be pleasurable, was often routine and perfunctory.

With Hannibal it felt like they were already making love.

With the press of each new finger Will’s chest ached more and more. A different pain than his ribs. A deep ache that made it hard to breath. When Hannibal’s fingers were gone and it felt like a lifetime before they were replaced, his throat constricted.

When Hannibal began to slowly and gently move within him, Will clutched at the man’s shoulders. He savoured the feel of their bodies moving together, closing his eyes and taking in everything around him. The scent of Hannibal’s skin - the freshness of the fruit he had squeezed layered amongst the musky sweat. The weight of him pressing Will to the bed. The feel of him inside and all around, like he was becoming something more. That together they were more and this was the truest expression of that.

Hannibal’s forehead was pressed against him as each movement brushed over and over his prostate, just enough to bring pleasure slowly bubbling up within him. He hadn’t realised at

first that the moans pushing up through his throat were coming out as sobs. He didn't know until he felt the wet trickle down his face and neck, that he was crying.

Hannibal pulled back a little, angling slow and languid thrusts and taking Will in hand at the same steady stroke so that he was on the verge of ecstasy. He started kissing away the tears on Will's face, which only caused more to flow.

"You're so beautiful Will." Hannibal murmured as he brought Will closer.

His orgasm seemed to suddenly happen, it had been slowly building and building until it cascaded through him and the cry it drew forth brought a louder sob. He wasn't sure of anything then but Hannibal holding him. His ribs throbbed but the pain almost didn't register. All he could feel was Hannibal breathing against him. All he could hear was Hannibal saying over and over -

"I love you Will, I love you."

Epilogue

Chapter Summary

Epilogue - One Year Later

1 year later - Valentine's Day

It wasn't exactly a country pile, but it made Will's house in Wolf Trap look like a shack. It had a sweeping veranda, enough room for everything from both their homes, a big yard, enough room for more dogs. In fact he wondered when Abby would start pestering them about an addition to their family. His bet was by nightfall.

As with everything, they had taken the process of moving in together slowly. But not for a lack of desire to get on with it, more the logistics involved in finding somewhere that was suitable for them. Not too far from either of their jobs, or Abby's school. And taking into account Will's preference to stay out of the city. All of this had made it difficult and although this might not be the sort of place Will would have been interested in if he were on his own, it definitely was enough of a compromise between both of their tastes to keep them happy.

Ecstatic in fact. They had spent so long living between each other's places that it had become more and more frustrating. It would be great to live somewhere together where they didn't have to worry about how much earlier they would need to leave for work from the wrong house, who was looking after the dogs, what time to leave to collect Abby from school. More than once Will had forgotten to reset his alarm when staying with Hannibal and had ended up late for class. The students didn't care, but he took professional pride in his work and also disliked the sly side-eye he'd get from his colleague Bev, who practically winked at him and gave him a knowing grin every time it happened.

Will turned the house keys over in his hands and looked at the swing-seat on the veranda and wondered how long it would take for Abby to find that instead of helping unpack her room. She had been very excited about the move before realising it involved her having to participate with the labour of it.

He didn't hear Hannibal come up behind him. And then Hannibal scooped him off his feet and into a bridal style carry. Making his way over the lawn.

"What are you doing?" Will asked, somewhere between amused and annoyed.

"Carrying you over the threshold," was Hannibal's no nonsense reply. It made Will smile - a memory from almost a year earlier of Hannibal giving him a ring box for the second time - complete with ring. A promise. One that was to become a reality in a little over six months. Even so he couldn't help but answer -

"I call that putting the cart before the horse considering we aren't married yet. And perhaps I'll carry you?" When Hannibal kept walking with no response - possibly because he was concentrating on not dropping a fully grown man - Will added "Have you thought about seeing a therapist about these bizarre heteronormative tendencies?"

He wasn't sure if the mommies had overheard that, but they were certainly laughing at them both as they got out of the minivan they had followed over in.

"Who said romance was dead?" Alana laughed.

Margot was grinning and joined in with - "And here I thought we wouldn't get any romance today considering two idiots decided to move in on Valentine's Day!"

"This isn't romantic, I assure you." Will replied gruffly, though he couldn't help the small smile.

When they got to the steps, Hannibal hesitated a moment and Will's grin grew wider as he watched Hannibal's changing micro expressions as he considered whether he could in fact carry a grown man up a few steps without putting his back out or worse. Will was about to object again when Hannibal started up the steps and then aimed Will at the door so that he could unlock it and push it open.

"This is all a lot more trouble than it's worth!" Will protested again as he bent at an awkward angle to unlock the door. "And if you do yourself an injury you will not be excused from helping!"

Hannibal raised a brow and proceeded in through the door, dropping Will back onto his feet and pulling him into a very thorough kiss.

"Please, there are children present." Alana joked as she stepped up on the veranda.

That drew them apart anyway and Hannibal grinned - "ah yes, we should make the most of Abigail's presence before she finds something more amusing to do."

They all shared a laugh and Abigail tried to look innocent before also breaking into a grin. She had spent an extraordinary amount of time hiding away and finding other things that absolutely had to be done instead of packing up her room at Will's house. Hannibal had been a soft touch and packed what little she had at his house for her.

They hadn't been wrong, within an hour Abby and the dogs were nowhere to be seen and Will knew they need look no further than the back yard, if they cared to find her. But, she was better off out from underfoot and she knew that Hannibal would help her unpack everything and find a place for it later. *Not that she had papa wrapped around a finger or anything.* Will grinned.

She had been able to charm Hannibal better than he could, and that was before she started calling him papa.

They had moved in all the boxes from his place and started to unpack the kitchen and living room by the time it got dark. The mommies insisted on testing the local pizza delivery service and Hannibal was outvoted despite saying he would happily treat everyone to dinner at a local restaurant he was fond of. Margot making the point by taking out two bottles of wine from her bag and telling them there was no chance anyone was going anywhere until morning.

The furniture wasn't arriving until morning so they sat on floor cushions, CD player set to something classical of Hannibal's. Wine for the grownups, apple juice for Abby, as they ate pizza out of boxes on the floor and Will couldn't even attempt to hide his amused grin as it practically made Hannibal's eye twitch.

They had all been talking when he leaned over and kissed Hannibal's cheek which drew an "aww" from Alana that made him blush in how unpatronising it was. All the chatter had stopped and Will cleared his throat. He was just about to get in first with something sarcastic before one of the mommies did when Abigail suddenly said -

"Now that we have a bigger house, can daddy and papa have a new baby? I think I would make a very good big sister."

Abigail's gaze went from her mothers to Will, looking at him with hopeful smile. As he tried to form the words he realised that everyone was looking at him expectantly - Alana in consideration, Margot in amusement. And Hannibal, he had one hell of a twinkle in his eyes.

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